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Assessment in International Primary Schools in Prague
from the Teachers' Perspectives

Hodnocení žáků na mezinárodních základních školách v Praze
z pohledu učitelů

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Abstrakt (česky)

Školní hodnocení je důležitou součástí vyučovacího procesu, která umožňuje učitelům zjistit vzdělávací potřeby žáků a podle toho naplánovat nebo upravit výuku. S celosvětovou expanzí mezinárodního školství došlo také k výraznému nárůstu počtu mezinárodních škol v České republice. Cílem této práce je prozkoumat pohled učitelů na proces hodnocení žáků v mezinárodních školách v Praze. Práce zkoumá důvody učitelů pro výběr konkrétních typů hodnocení, jejich vnímání role hodnocení ve výuce a způsoby, jakými přizpůsobují hodnocení tak, aby vyhovovalo všem žákům v prostředí mezinárodní školy. Data byla shromážděna prostřednictvím polostrukturovaných rozhovorů se zkušenými učiteli ze tří mezinárodních škol v Praze a kódována a analyzována pomocí tematické analýzy.

Data z rozhovorů naznačují, že se učitelé při svém rozhodování řídí především jejich vnímáním toho, co by bylo pro žáky nejpřínosnější. Učitelé oceňují formativní roli hodnocení a zvažují informování všech relevantních zúčastněných stran o pokroku žáků. Z analýzy dále vyplývá, že vnímají hodnocení jako významné pro akademický, sociální a emocionální růst žáků. Kromě toho zjištění poukazuje na výzvy, kterým tito učitelé čelí ve své hodnotící praxi, a strategie, které používají pro úspěšné hodnocení.

Abstract (in English)

School assessment is an important part of the teaching process, which enables teachers to identify students' learning needs and plan or adjust the instruction accordingly. With the global expansion of the international school sector, there has also been a significant rise in the number of international schools in the Czech Republic. This thesis aims to explore teachers' perspectives on the assessment process in the international schools in Prague. It examines teachers' rationales for selecting specific assessment types, their perceptions of the role of assessment in learning, and ways they adapt assessments to accommodate all students in an international school setting. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews with experienced teachers from three international schools in Prague, and coded and analysed using thematic analysis.

The interview data suggest that teachers' decision-making is primarily guided by their perception of what would most benefit the students. Teachers value the formative role of assessments and consider informing all relevant stakeholders of students' progress. The analysis further indicates that they perceive assessment as significant in students' academic, social and emotional growth. Additionally, the findings reflect the challenges these teachers face in their assessment practice and strategies for successful assessment.

Table of contents

Introduction.....	8
1 International schools	9
1.1 Defining international schools.....	10
1.2 Different types of international schools	12
1.3 International school curriculum and assessment	14
2 School assessment	17
2.1 Assessment principles	18
2.2 Functions of school assessment.....	20
2.3 Types of school assessment.....	22
2.3.1 <i>Assessment types based on referencing</i>	23
2.3.2 <i>Formative and summative assessments</i>	24
2.3.3 <i>Other types of assessment</i>	29
2.3.4 <i>Student-centred assessments</i>	31
3 Middle childhood development	33
3.1 Physical and cognitive development during middle childhood.....	33
3.2 Social and emotional development during middle childhood	35
3.3 The role of school in middle childhood development	37
3.3.1 <i>Learning process in middle childhood</i>	38
3.3.2 <i>Assessment in relation to middle childhood development</i>	39
4 Methodology.....	42
4.1 Research objective and research questions.....	42
4.2 Choice of the research method	42
4.2.1 <i>Choice of data collection technique</i>	43
4.2.2 <i>Choice of data analysis method</i>	44
4.3 Conducting the study	44
4.3.1 <i>Selection of respondents</i>	44
4.3.2 <i>Conducting the interviews</i>	45
4.3.3 <i>Data analysis</i>	47
4.4 Limitations and other considerations.....	48
4.5 Research ethics	49

5	Research findings and analysis.....	51
5.1	Teachers’ rationales for choosing certain types of assessments.....	51
5.1.1	<i>Using assessments to inform teaching.....</i>	<i>51</i>
5.1.2	<i>Providing feedback to students</i>	<i>54</i>
5.1.3	<i>Reporting to parents</i>	<i>56</i>
5.1.4	<i>Ensuring accountability in assessment practices</i>	<i>57</i>
5.2	Teachers’ perceptions of the role of assessment in student learning.....	59
5.2.1	<i>Impact on motivation</i>	<i>59</i>
5.2.2	<i>Supporting social and emotional learning</i>	<i>60</i>
5.2.3	<i>Student involvement in assessment</i>	<i>63</i>
5.2.4	<i>Preparing students for the future.....</i>	<i>64</i>
5.3	Adaptation of assessment practices to accommodate students’ needs in diverse learning environments.....	65
5.3.1	<i>Assessment challenges</i>	<i>66</i>
5.3.2	<i>Strategies for successful assessments</i>	<i>68</i>
6	Summary and discussion	70
	Conclusion	74
	References.....	76
	List of figures.....	84
	List of abbreviations	85
	List of Appendices.....	86

Introduction

School assessment is an inseparable part of education. Besides measuring students' progress, assessment gives invaluable input into the quality of the learning process and, if used effectively, can lead to significant improvements. Assessment in primary schools has its specifics, and teachers must take into account students' cognitive, social, and emotional development during middle childhood. Moreover, the international school concept significantly differs from the state school sector, it is distinguished by a diverse student body, a different curriculum, and typically a specific assessment system. Assessment practices in international schools tend to be complex due to the diversity of student backgrounds, languages, and educational experiences. Teachers have a significant role in the assessment process, and their knowledge and skills, but also beliefs, can largely influence assessment practices.

The purpose of this study is to explore the assessment process in international primary schools in Prague from the teachers' perspectives. The study is guided by the following research questions: *What are teachers' rationales for choosing certain types of assessments? What are teachers' perceptions of the role of assessment in student learning? How do teachers adapt their assessment practices to accommodate students in a diverse learning environment?* The findings might be of particular interest to educators in international schools and the parents of students attending international schools. Moreover, this topic can be of significance for educators in public schools in the Czech Republic and abroad, who are interested in examples of different practices.

This thesis is structured as follows. First, the international school concept is outlined, its brief history and the commonly offered curriculum and assessment programmes are presented. Second, school assessment is explored, including its main principles and functions, as well as different types. The third chapter describes middle childhood development, the role of school, and the influence of assessment on this development. Following, the research methods used in this thesis are described. Given the stated aim of the thesis, a qualitative method was chosen for data processing. Semi-structured interviews were used for data collection, and thematic analysis was employed for coding and analysis of the data. Finally, the research findings are presented and then discussed in relation to existing literature.

1 International schools

International schools are educational institutions that provide a global and multicultural learning environment for students from diverse backgrounds. The history of the international school movement, as we know it today, is relatively long, dating back to 1924 and the founding of the International School of Geneva (*Ecole Internationale de Geneve*, often referred to as *Ecolint*), followed the same year by the Yokohama International School in Japan (Cancemi, 2009; Hayden, 2011). The primary purpose of international schools was to provide adequate education to children of expatriates and diplomats. Education offered at these schools was comparable to the educational system of students' home countries and was expected to prepare students for the exams, once they return home (Hayden & Thompson, 2008; Hill, 2012). Hill (2012) further asserts that the parents at these schools demanded a curriculum that would satisfy the needs of an international student body.

After the Second World War, with the increase of employee relocation around the world, the number of international schools grew (Hayden, 2011). Since only the wealthy could afford to travel widely during this time, Hill (2012) states that international schools were elitist, explaining that they were exclusive to the children of UN staff, diplomats, and employees of international corporations. Additionally, with further expansion of the international school movement, the International Schools Association (ISA) was established in 1951, to “provide pedagogical, curriculum and administrative support to an increasing number of schools scattered around the world and to bring them together as a network to discuss common problems” (Hill, 2012, p. 250). Following ISA, which still serves its purpose, many other organisations were founded with a similar goal – to support international schools by offering curriculum, training, and accreditation. Some of those institutions are the Educational Collaborative for International Schools (ECIS), founded in 1965 (ECIS, 2024), Independent Schools Council (ISC), founded in 1974 (Independent Schools Council, 2024), Council of International Schools (CIS), and Council of British International Schools (COBIS). In addition to these international organisations, there are some national institutions that, besides their primary role of supporting national schools, offer support to schools around the world, such as the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC).

1.1 Defining international schools

International schools are part of a larger discipline – international education. Many scholars (Cambridge* & Thompson, 2004; Hayden, 2011; Thompson, 2002; Wylie, 2008) agree that, although widely used, the term international education is difficult to define and leaves room for interpretation uncertainty. According to Wells (2011), international education should be referred to as a “field”, rather than a single concept. The author explains that this field is “broad and dynamic” concerning institutions that provide international education, the curriculum that is offered, as well as the student body (p. 174). Another author (Wylie, 2008) draws further attention to the different aspects of international education, such as international curriculum, or international students and teachers.

In 1950, at a conference that took place at Ecolint, teachers and school principals from around the world agreed on the following definition of international education:

[International education] should give the child an understanding of his past as a common heritage to which all men irrespective of nation, race or creed have contributed and which all men should share; it should give him an understanding of his present world as a world in which peoples are interdependent and in which cooperation is a necessity. In such an education emphasis should be laid on a basic attitude of respect for all human beings as persons, understanding of those things which unite us and an appreciation of the positive values of those things which may seem to divide us, with the objective of thinking free from fear or prejudice. (Course for Teachers Interested in International Education, 1950, as cited in Hill, 2012, p. 251)

According to Hill (2012), this definition suggests an educational foundation for international mindedness. Other authors (Bunnell, 2019; Hayden & Thompson, 2008) also argued that international mindedness is closely linked to international education.

International mindedness can be defined as “a multifaceted concept that captures a way of thinking, being and acting characterized by an openness to the world and a recognition of our deep interconnectedness to others” (IB, 2019, p. 2). According to Hill (2012), international mindedness incorporates multicultural knowledge and understanding of global issues, as well as critical thinking skills. Moreover, the author emphasises that it also involves applying that knowledge and skills to improve the world we live in through “intercultural understanding, peaceful co-existence and global sustainable development for the future of the human race” (p. 259). Similarly, Singh and Qi (2013) point out the importance of the learners’

“sense of a shared guardianship of the planet, as well as their active commitment to world peace and development” (p. 14). International mindedness is therefore related to multilingualism, intercultural understanding, and global engagement (Barratt Hacking et al., 2018; Hill, 2012; Singh & Qi, 2013). Based upon their systematic study on the way international schools evaluate international mindedness, Barratt Hacking et al. (2018) conclude that international mindedness can be described as “a way of thinking”, “a way of acting”, “a way of living”, and “a mind-set” (p. 7).

Hayden and Thompson (2008) emphasise the adaptation of international schools not only to the fast-growing idea of international mindedness, but also to the aspiration for world peace and overcoming prejudice and ignorance. The authors state that these schools respond to the growing concerns about environmental awareness and social responsibility and add that many national systems are failing to provide education that would fully satisfy those needs. International education is indeed connected to globalisation and multinational and multicultural education (Thompson, 2002; Wylie, 2008). Hayden et al. (2000) in their study exploring what being international means for students and teachers in international schools, conclude that priority is given to attitude-related factors i.e., showing interest and being informed and respectful about other people and different parts of the world, as well as being open-minded and accepting of diversity. According to the authors, another factor that was considered an important aspect of being international by both the students and the teachers is second language competence, more specifically, being fluent in more than one language.

Following, Cambridge* and Thompson (2004) offer an explanation of international education through the ideological and pragmatic perspective, and state that this field is focused on each student’s moral development by encouraging positive values regarding world peace and global citizenship. The pragmatic aspect of international education reflects in globalisation and the need to fulfil the growing demands for more universal qualifications and global quality standards, which is ensured through accreditation (Cambridge* & Thompson, 2004). The authors draw further attention to the importance of incorporating international understanding within international education.

As seen by Hayden and Thompson (2008), many international schools are independent in their work and do not share a common philosophy with other schools, even if their interests overlap in some respects. However, although very diverse, most international schools share certain characteristics that distinguish them from national schools. The authors mention the

most important characteristics common for many international schools, such as a specific curriculum which is different from national, students who are frequently foreigners, and teachers and administrators who are often expats. Another interesting characteristic of the international school concept is that, although they can offer education in any world language, in practice majority of international schools' main language of instruction is English (Hayden & Thompson, 2008).

In recent decades, the international school sector has seen rapid expansion and development, which explains the reason this area is still relatively thinly researched. Additionally, the variety of institutions that describe themselves as international presents a challenge in making generalised definitions and conclusions about international schools. Hayden and Thompson (1995) further argue that international education is not exclusively provided at international schools, and that not every international school provides international education, as “an international school may offer education that makes no claims to be international” (Cambridge* & Thompson, 2004, p. 162).

ISC Research identifies international schools as private schools offering either a curriculum in English language in a non-English speaking country, or a curriculum that differs from the host country's national curriculum in a country where English is the official language (ISC Research, 2024). Consequently, such broad definitions may lead to further complicating the field of international education, where many schools can be defined as international without careful consideration. Bunnell (2019) highlights this issue and draws attention to the rapidly growing number of private schools that do not have a valid justification to be called as such, and he labels the phenomenon as a “field of relatively elite private education” (p. 2). There is indeed an increasing number of international schools with a wide diversity of education they provide. Therefore, the international school can be viewed as an umbrella term, considering the different types of schools it includes.

1.2 Different types of international schools

It is claimed that the purpose of international schools has changed considerably, as evidenced by the large number of institutions that now address three new trends i.e., a discontent with the quality of the national education systems, an interest by the families to encourage an international mindset, and the requirement to prepare students for life and work in the modern world (Hayden & Thompson, 2008). The authors predict a significant further

expansion of the international school sector with the increasing globalisation and explain some of the reasons that mobile families opt for international education, such as the dominance of the English language and international communication worldwide, as well as the importance of enlarging the social network.

Hayden and Thompson (2008) draw a distinction between the two main types of international schools. According to the authors, traditional international schools were mostly founded after the Second World War to offer education to children of UN employees and diplomats. These schools fulfilled the pragmatic needs of expatriate families by offering quality education to prepare students for the examination process in their home countries (Hayden & Thompson, 2008). International schools of the traditional type had a strong ethos of working towards world peace, and they were founded on a non-profit basis (Hill, 2012; Savva & Stanfield, 2018). Tay (2018) adds that these are “original” international schools that could be considered as “national schools outside the country of origin”, but have over time evolved (p. 88).

Not entirely distinct in every regard, ideological international schools focus on encouraging young people to become international citizens who care about global stability, ethical behaviour, and sustainable development (Hayden & Thompson, 2008). These schools are enrolling students from different social backgrounds, rather than being exclusive to the middle and higher class, as was the case with traditional schools (Savva & Stanfield, 2018). The authors identify these schools’ commitment to a peaceful ideology that opposes any kind of violence and nurtures pacifism.

Furthermore, with the rapid expansion of the international school movement from the beginning of this century, many authors notice a new form of schools i.e., non-traditional type (Bunnell et al., 2016; Hayden, 2011; Savva & Standfield, 2018; Tay, 2023; Wells, 2011). What characterises these schools is a commercial, for-profit scheme (Bunnell et al., 2016). Non-traditional schools adjust their offer to economically advantaged families that choose international education in order to prepare children with competitive knowledge and skills for applying to university and the employment market (Hayden & Thompson, 2008). Moreover, they also differ from the former two types of international schools by the student body, as these schools offer an international curriculum mostly to local children, who are typically English language learners (Hayden, 2011; Savva & Stanfield, 2018; Tay, 2023). The non-traditional schools can be considered as a “hybrid of national and international schools”, since

they offer an international curriculum to national students (Tay, 2023, p. 88). Bunnell et al. (2016) assert that these schools are considered international simply because they offer a curriculum in English language in a non-English speaking country. Moreover, Hayden (2011) regards this type of international school and the education they offer as “western liberal and Anglo-centric, raising questions of cultural and linguistic imperialism” (p. 220).

Many schools, however, while responding to the pragmatic need, offer education that aspires to prepare students for adulthood as responsible and competent citizens in a globalised society (Hayden & Thompson, 2008). The authors emphasise that, although there are different types of international schools, many of them are independent in their work. That said, schools must go beyond solely providing education in English language in a non-English speaking country in order to be legitimately considered international (Bunnell et al., 2016; 2017). According to the authors, diversity is an important aspect of international education, and international schools should enrol a diverse student body, rather than only national students, as is the case in many non-traditional schools. Another essential requirement for the schools to be regarded as international is an international curriculum (Bunnell et al., 2017), as in “the provision of an international curriculum is central in establishing the legitimacy of a school’s claim to be an International School. It is an International School’s institutional primary task” (p. 13).

1.3 International school curriculum and assessment

In the past, school curricula were often based on the culture of the local society, aiming to prepare students for adulthood in a world similar to that of their parents. However, rapid advances in technology, communication, and global interdependence have created many uncertainties in education, making it essential to prepare students for a future that reaches beyond national boundaries and involves a strong awareness of international influences.

“Educators and policymakers increasingly grapple with the thorny issue of how best to prepare future generations for life in a world changing so rapidly that no one is able to predict precisely what knowledge and skills will be relevant for the adult of tomorrow” (Hayden, 2013, p. 8).

It is perhaps not surprising that one of the deciding criteria when choosing a school is the curriculum that is offered, which should provide students with a successful foundation for the future (Hingston, 2024). International schools offer a variety of curricula, from the

Primary Years Programme (PYP, part of the International Baccalaureate - IB), International Primary Curriculum (IPC), Cambridge Primary Curriculum, Pearson Edexcel International Primary Curriculum, to the adapted versions of national curricula (often National Curriculum of England and Wales) or even the combination of the international curriculum and national curriculum of the country school operates in.

One of the leading institutions in international education, the International Baccalaureate (IB), was founded in Geneva in 1968 as a nonprofit educational organisation (Cambridge* & Thompson, 2004; Hayden, 2013; Wells, 2011). The organisation was the first one to offer an international curriculum, known as the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme (IB DP), to provide education to students aged 16 to 18 attending international schools (Hayden, 2013). Cambridge* and Thompson (2004) add that this curriculum was designed to prepare students for higher education, and it was widely recognised by the universities. However, the organisation has expanded its offered programmes over time, and now caters to the educational needs of students of all ages, offering the Primary Years Programme, Middle Years Programme, Diploma Programme, and Career-related Programmes (Barratt Hacking et al., 2018; Cambridge* & Thompson, 2004; Hayden, 2013). The IB Primary Years Programme (PYP) was founded in 1997 to provide an international curriculum to children between the ages of 3 and 12 (Cambridge* & Thompson, 2004).

The PYP offers a curriculum that is interdisciplinary, inquiry-based and focused on the learner, with lessons aimed at a holistic understanding of the content and that encourages students to take an active role in their learning (IB, 2005). Central to the PYP programme (as well as all the IB programmes) are international mindedness and critical thinking skills (Cambridge* & Thompson, 2004). Another international primary curriculum offered worldwide is the Cambridge Primary, offered to students from 5 to 11 years old (Hayden, 2011). This curriculum is flexible, so it can be adapted to offer education with the national curriculum or as part of bilingual education (Cambridge, 2024). It also offers assessment support, from written or computer-based tests to measure and benchmark performance, through offering guidance to provide formative feedback to students (Cambridge, 2024). Additionally, Pearson Edexcel offers Edexcel International Primary Curriculum to children aged 3 to 11 (Hayden, 2011). This programme offers lesson plans and schemes of work, assessment materials and support, as well as the professional development programme (Pearson Qualifications, 2024). Further, another important organisation that provides an international curriculum is the International Curriculum Association (ICA), which offers the

International Primary Curriculum (IPC) for students ranging from 5 to 11 years old (Hayden, 2013).

Just as the curriculum varies in different international schools, examination and assessment systems have often been modified and developed to meet schools' specific needs. Consequently, international schools may face challenges in opting for an adequate curriculum and assessment system that would reflect the schools' mission and vision. Hill (2012) asserts that international schools focused on international mindedness usually assess students' performance through using clear standards for knowledge, skills, and attitudes, essentially supporting the development of multiple perspectives.

2 School assessment

Assessment plays an important role in supporting students' educational and developmental needs during middle childhood. It is a helpful tool for identifying each child's individual strengths and areas that require improvement. Besides evaluating students' academic progress, assessments also provide feedback to parents about their children's learning and development. By using assessments effectively, educators can help ensure that children receive the support and interventions needed to reach their full potential.

Assessment is regarded as an essential educational tool. Besides organised assessment processes, such as final exams, tests, graded work, etc., it also occurs daily, sometimes in situations in which the participants are not fully aware of the assessment activity e.g., an encouraging smile, a nod in agreement, simple praise, etc. (Kolář & Šikulová, 2009). Furthermore, for Popham (2017), assessment is a complex term that describes “educational measuring teachers do” that can be defined as a “formal attempt to determine students' status with respect to educational variables of interest” (p. 10). The author further explains these variables of interest as the differences in students' knowledge and skills, in their attitudes toward school, etc.

Assessment has also been described as the bridge between teaching and learning (Wiliam, 2013). Wiliam expands on this point and says that assessment is the only tool to determine if the teaching process has led to the intended learning. This, according to the author, makes assessment a necessary and essential part of education, since “if our students learned what we taught, we would never need to assess” (Wiliam, 2013, p. 15). Teachers use assessments to determine students' current knowledge levels of areas being taught, as well as their cognitive skills. The assessment results can then be used to distinguish what has already been mastered by the students and what parts of the lessons need more instruction. Assessments should therefore be treated as an integral part of continuously progressive instruction at schools and be used for effective planning and teaching (Popham, 2017; Weeden et al., 2002). Drawing conclusions on a conducted research project, Weeden et al. (2002) assert that many students lack understanding of what they are learning and the reasons for learning it. The authors further state that students are often unaware of their own strengths and weaknesses in learning and can be confused by the feedback they receive from teachers. Consequently, this suggests that students are often prepared for passing the tests but not encouraged enough to be independent in their learning. Assessment is therefore crucial for

evaluating individual students' progress, guiding teaching, and enhancing learning strategies. In addition, reporting assessment results to the relevant stakeholders supports informed decision-making at the school and on a broader level (Nusche, 2013).

Regarding the specifics of educational assessment, Kolář and Šikulová (2009) assert that assessment is the only evaluation in a person's life that is inherently systematic, mainly because teachers plan and prepare assessment activity, organise it, conduct it regularly, and the results of assessments are usually compared with the chosen standards. Assessment generally consists of the collection, analysis, sharing, and application of data to serve a specific purpose (Harlen, 2014). Additionally, another significance of school assessment is identified i.e., its contribution to the formation of the psychological aspects of each student's personality (Kolář & Šikulová, 2009). The authors state that assessment influences students' self-esteem, self-consciousness, motivation, their position in the group, and their relationships with other people (Kolář & Šikulová, 2009).

2.1 Assessment principles

Assessment is an effective educational tool that can foster successful learning when used correctly. Irving (1997) points to the importance of clarifying questions that should be asked when planning assessment, as:

- What information is expected from the assessment, and what is the best way to acquire it,
- Why is it important,
- When is the right time to gather this information,
- How is it going to be used, and
- Who will benefit from this information.

According to the author, another important question to ask after the assessment process is Where to now? This question refers to recording and reporting the information acquired and using it for further planning (Irving, 1997).

For an assessment to be successful, it is important to adhere to certain principles during its planning and implementation. A fundamental first step in the assessment process is to ensure that the reasons for assessing students are understood and that assessment is designed to meet specific needs (McAlpine, 2002). Efficient assessment has a clear **purpose**

and is implemented through appropriate methods and tools. Purpose is identified as an essential principle of assessment (Evidence based education, 2017; McAlpine, 2002), and assessment methods should be thoughtfully chosen to fulfil their intended purpose (Britton, 2021). To achieve purposeful assessment, it is crucial to clearly specify what should be assessed and why, in order to choose the appropriate assessment tools. The following aspects help ensure this (Evidence based education, 2017):

- the construct, which reflects the targeted knowledge, skill, or understanding aimed to be assessed,
- the end use, which refers to the intended interpretation, decision, or action based on the assessment results, and
- the best tool, representing the most suitable method and timing to assess.

Another important principle of assessment is **validity**. Validity refers to the ability of an assessment to measure what is intended to measure, and provide useful and relevant information (Brualdi, 2002; Evidence based education, 2017; McAlpine, 2002; Petty, 2009). For assessment to be valid and informative, the tools used for collecting data must be aligned with curriculum and instruction (Jiao & Lissitz, 2022). It is also important to take into account the purpose of the assessment when checking for validity, as the assessment can be valid for a particular purpose, but it cannot be considered absolutely valid (Evidence based education, 2017; Galaczi, 2020). Moreover, it has been argued that assessment is meaningful only if it is valid in relation to its intended purpose (Jiao & Lissitz, 2022).

Following, **reliability** is another aspect that should be taken into account when assessing. Assessment reliability refers to generating accurate and consistent results across different times and settings (Evidence based education, 2017; McAlpine, 2002) that correspond with the learner's ability (Galaczi, 2020). Similar to validity, assessment reliability cannot be entirely achieved, as the assessment simply contains error, which should not be underestimated (Gardner et al., 2008; McMillan, 2002; Rudner & Schafer, 2002). It is, however, important to understand reliability in order to improve it and thus increase assessment value to teachers and students. As stated in the resource guide by the Evidence based education (2017), to increase the reliability of an assessment, it is essential to focus on the clarity of questions and tasks given to students, as well as the accuracy and consistency in interpreting their assessment responses. Ultimately, the assessment process should meet the required level of reliability for its intended purpose (Gardner et al., 2008).

Finally, another concept that should be considered is the impact that assessment has on the learners, or the **value** for both teachers and students. Assessment is not a strictly predictable variable; on the contrary, its value also reflects the possibility of providing surprising results (Evidence based education, 2017). Nusche (2013) argues that valuable assessment must be well-timed, easily interpreted by both teachers and students, and useful for guiding further instruction. Moreover, many scholars (Galaczi, 2020; Gardner et al., 2008; Jiao & Lissitz, 2022; McMillan, 2002) refer to an important element of assessment, which is enhancing the learning process. Assessment should provide insight into which activities and assignments will be most effective and what depth, complexity, and pace of instruction will match students' current understanding and skills (McMillan, 2002). Valuable assessment, therefore, informs teaching practices and enhances learning for every student.

2.2 Functions of school assessment

School assessment fulfils many different functions, and it can be considered a complex phenomenon with varying aspects connected to learning and teaching (Rea-Dickins, 2001). According to Kolář and Šikulová (2009), assessment leads to students' experience of success or failure, and this is the motive for further learning. The **motivational function** is the most emphasised assessment function. Motivational function of assessment is considered as one of the most powerful functions of this process in education, as it affects students' emotional aspects and intimate spheres of their personality (Kolář & Šikulová, 2009). The authors state that students are often motivated to learn primarily through assessment. Yet, assessment does not automatically fulfil the motivational function of learning. For effective learning outcomes, teachers should use assessment as positive motivation, while ensuring that assessment does not become a method of reward or punishment (Hattie & Temperley, 2007; Kolář & Šikulová, 2009). Moreover, if students are motivated primarily through assessment, there is a concern that assessment can become the objective itself, rather than a tool to achieve a certain objective (Szököl et al., 2022). Further, McMillan (2002) argues that a core principle in education is recognising how assessment affects students. The author gives examples of questions that can be posed to understand how assessment shapes motivation and learning, for example:

- Will students be more engaged if assessment tasks are problem-based?
- How do students study when they know the test consists of multiple-choice items?

- What is the nature of feedback, and when is it given to students?
- How does assessment affect student effort? (McMillan, 2002, p. 8).

Traditionally, educational assessment serves to compare students' current state of knowledge and skills with the standard that should have been achieved by mastering taught activities. The **informative function** of assessment represents concrete information on whether the set objective has been achieved or how far the student is from meeting the target (Kolář & Šikulová, 2009; Szőköl et al., 2022). Besides giving information to the students and parents about students' performance and achievements, the assessment also has an informative value for the teachers, as it helps them reflect on the quality of their own teaching, and adjust the instruction as needed to meet students' needs. Kolář and Šikulová (2009) emphasise the importance of feedback within the informative function of assessment, which is aimed at improving the quality of specific learning activities, as well as students' behaviour in various situations. Additionally, Pellegrino et al. (2001) state the benefits of integrally linked instruction and assessment at school, namely that providing effective feedback to students leads to improved learning performance. In exploring the nature of teachers' feedback, Eriksson et al. (2018) concluded that, when giving feedback, teachers primarily consider students' needs, namely their academic, behavioural and emotional needs, and also different factors i.e., situation, relationships, time, and effort.

The educational assessment also has a **regulatory function**. The regulatory function involves a thorough analysis of student achievement, paying attention to individual learning styles, and offering support to address any challenges that may arise in learning (Szőköl et al., 2022). According to Kolář and Šikulová (2009), the assessment process functions as the main means of regulating student's learning activity. Through assessment, the teacher intentionally influences the quality of students' work, not only in the final result, but above all in the learning process itself. For students, school assessment is the main regulator of learning, as they are governed primarily by what individual teachers assess and how demandingly they evaluate. Assessment consequently becomes the foundation of self-regulation, as the students can evaluate the result of their work concerning the course of their activity and, at the same time, they can evaluate what methodical means they have used to achieve this result (Kolář & Šikulová, 2009).

Through the regulatory function, assessment also fulfils its **educational function**, as it fosters development of positive qualities and attitudes of the students towards themselves and

their surroundings (Szőköl et al., 2022). By means of assessment, especially positive assessment, the teacher can significantly influence the aspirations of the student, their value orientation, and their self-awareness (Kolář & Šikulová, 2009). The educational function, also referred to as learning function (Rea-Dickins, 2001), centres on learning through assessment and highlights the learner's involvement in the process (Britton, 2021). From this perspective, assessment is integrated into instruction and is regarded as supporting learning rather than merely measuring it. It has been further argued that assessment leads to fostering deeper awareness and understanding in students, and to developing reflective skills (Rea-Dickins, 2001; Szőköl et al., 2022).

Further, the **prognostic function** of assessment is important, as the long-term assessment allows for prediction of student's prospects with a certain probability (Kolář & Šikulová, 2009). The authors state that the prognostic function is closely related to the **differentiation function**, since the assessment provides information to classify students based on their performance and attainment. The authors further suggest that students should be classified into homogeneous performance groups, based on their level of knowledge, learning styles, behavioural and social development etc. However, this is likely an outdated approach in the era of diversity, equity and inclusion.

Finally, Britton (2021) highlights two other important functions of assessment i.e., **formative function**, with focus on supporting student development and learning, and **summative function**, which manifests in measuring students' progress. It is worth noting that the functions of assessment should not be identified with the methods or tools for its realisation, as the results of summative assessment can be applied for formative function and purpose (Britton, 2021). However, it is important to consider the function of assessment when choosing an appropriate assessment type.

2.3 Types of school assessment

There are many different types of educational assessments. Pellegrino et al. (2001) state that "one type of assessment does not fit all" and emphasise the importance of choosing the appropriate type and method according to the assessment purpose (p. 2). Similarly, Kolář and Šikulová (2009) point out that each type of assessment has its meaning and that teachers should choose it thoughtfully in relation to the purpose of the lesson, to the specific student, to the expected results of the assessment, etc. Effective assessments therefore combine various

methods to build a detailed insight into students' knowledge and skills. It is important to understand the full spectrum of assessment types, methods and techniques, and to acknowledge that each assessment type has its own limitations (McMillan, 2002).

In this thesis, the school assessment is categorised based on referencing, based on the assessment's primary purpose, to types of assessment focused on the student, as well as other types of assessment.

2.3.1 Assessment types based on referencing

Assessment can be understood as a “process of professional judgment” (McMillan, 2002, p. 6), and referencing is seen as the foundation of this judgment (McAlpine, 2002). In other words, for assessment to be meaningful, students' abilities should be evaluated against a common measure. Students' performance is usually compared with their peers' performance, with objective criteria, or with the students' own performance (McAlpine, 2002).

When students' performance is assessed in relation to the performance of other students, we are talking about **norm-referenced assessment** (Kolář & Šikulová, 2009; McAlpine, 2002). Kolář and Šikulová (2009) refer to this type of assessment as social-normative assessment. The authors state that a student's performance is compared with the performance of other students in the class and this allows the teachers to use the same criterion for all students. This form of assessment, once widely used, has fallen out of favour in contemporary education, as it provides limited insight into students' actual abilities. Moreover, Slavík (1999) argues that social-normative assessment can represent a psychological burden for students, as it involves comparing their success with others, and thus can lead to stress and anxiety. McAlpine (2002) further asserts that this type of assessment is still beneficial for selective processes.

Unlike normative, **criterion-referenced assessment** focuses on measuring student's achievement and comparing it to predetermined standards or criteria (Britton, 2021; Hill, 2012; Kolář & Šikulová, 2009; McAlpine, 2002). All students who meet this criterion are then evaluated with the corresponding mark, regardless of the results achieved by the others (Kolář & Šikulová, 2009), and this helps teachers avoid ranking students in a hierarchy based on intelligence (Hill, 2012). Kolář & Šikulová (2009) further draw attention to contract learning as a model of teaching and learning that supports criterion-referenced assessment. Contract learning represents an agreement between the teacher and the student concerning

requirements that should be fulfilled and promotes taking responsibility by the students for their learning (Kolář & Šikulová, 2009). Another example of criterion-referenced assessment is mastery learning, which represents teaching and learning strategies that lead to students' self-correction based on their understanding of the mistake they have made and the ways to correct it (Kolář & Šikulová, 2009).

Finally, the students can be assessed in comparison with their own performance in the past or in another area. This type of assessment is called **ipsative assessment**, and is suitable for diagnostic and formative purposes (McAlpine, 2002). Also referred to as individual-normative, this type of assessment serves to compare student's performance with their previous performances, which allows both the teacher and the student to monitor the progress towards the set objective (Kolář & Šikulová, 2009).

2.3.2 *Formative and summative assessments*

It has been argued that the primary purposes of student assessment are to support students during the learning process and to determine their level of understanding at a specific time (Harlen, 2014; Nusche, 2013). Depending on the purpose assessments have in learning, many authors (including Black & Wiliam, 2009; Harlen, 2014; Jiao & Lissitz, 2022; Kolář & Šikulová, 2009; Nusche, 2013) distinguish between formative and summative assessments. The purpose of formative assessment is to support and enhance the learning process and therefore it is often referred to as assessment *for* learning (AfL) (Black et al., 2004; Harlen, 2014). On the other hand, summative assessment, also known as assessment *of* learning (AoL), focuses on summarising and reporting what students have learned at a specific point in time (Harlen, 2014).

Formative assessment, or AfL, is described as a process that provides useful feedback to students by helping with identifying deficiencies in their work and offering guidance and instruction aimed at improving future performance (Kolář & Šikulová, 2009). The authors add that this type of assessment also serves the teacher as a source of information that will help them meet the students' needs in the future. It can be concluded that formative assessment has two key aspects in education. Firstly, it offers insights into the efficacy of the teaching methods, enabling teachers to modify instruction to enhance student progress (Black & Wiliam, 1989; Harlen, 2014; Jiao & Lissitz, 2022). Secondly, it provides information to students, which can be useful in identifying areas for improvement (Black & Wiliam, 1989;

Harlen, 2014; Jiao & Lissitz, 2022; McAlpine, 2002). AfL supports students' learning by identifying the difference between current achievement and the set target, and offering feedback to improve their performance. This type of assessment is closely linked to the interactions between students and teachers (Jiao & Lissitz, 2022).

It is essential to acknowledge the active role of the teacher, the student, and the peers in the formative assessment process (Black & Wiliam, 1989; Wiliam & Thompson, 2008). Black and Wiliam (2009) further assert that formative interaction relies on students' responses, as the teacher aims to understand their thought process through these responses, in order to encourage deeper thinking and engage students in their learning. Similarly, Fletcher-Wood (2018) coined the term responsive teaching, with the emphasis on checking students' understanding to appropriately respond to their learning needs. In the teaching process, the learner's interpretation of the message may differ from the teacher's intended meaning and vice versa, which means that even the teacher's perspective may evolve as a result of formative interaction (Black & Wiliam, 2009). According to Petty (2009), the learning process is strongly influenced by the following communication chain:



Figure 1 Communication chain

It is therefore crucial to encourage students to ask questions throughout the learning process, as sometimes “the message sent is not the message received, and what is taught is not what is learned” (Petty, 2009, p. 40).

In addition, formative assessment provides teachers with insight into whether to proceed with teaching or to provide additional clarification and examples, when to delve into further questioning, and how best to respond to students' questions (McMillan, 2002). Furthermore, it has been argued that, in order to be formative, assessment must influence further learning (Antoniou & James, 2014; Black et al., 2004; Harlen, 2014), as “assessments are formative only to the extent that they impact learning” (Wiliam & Thompson, 2008, p. 14). Black and Wiliam (2007) clarify that formative assessment must involve efforts by both teachers and students to improve the learning process, as teaching should be “adaptive to the student's learning needs” (Wiliam & Thompson, 2008, p. 15). Moreover, formative

assessment can be described with regard to “action taken as a consequence of an assessment activity”, which can be taken by the teacher, the student, or the school (Rea-Dickins, 2001, p. 432).

AfL was defined as “the process of seeking and interpreting evidence for use by learners and their teachers to decide where the learners are in their learning, where they need to go and how best to get there” (Broadfoot et al., 2002, p. 2). Britton (2021) further builds upon this definition and breaks it into three major steps: gathering evidence, outlining specific objectives, and facilitating progress toward the set objectives. Moreover, according to Wiliam and Thompson (2008), formative assessment consists of five main strategies i.e.,

- clarifying and sharing learning intentions and criteria for success;
- engineering effective classroom discussions, questions, and learning tasks;
- providing feedback that moves learners forward;
- activating students as instructional resources for one another; and
- activating students as the owners of their own learning (p. 15).

Formative assessment is an ongoing process where evidence of learning is collected to determine students’ understanding and adjust instruction to meet learning goals, where students collaborate with teachers to understand progress, set goals, and plan the next steps. Sharing learning goals allows students to actively engage in their learning by discussing and determining success criteria, which helps them identify evidence of progress (Büyükkarcı, 2014). To improve performance, learning objectives and success criteria must be communicated clearly and in language that students can easily comprehend (Büyükkarcı, 2014). Visual learning acronyms can play a significant role in clarifying the focus and purpose of students’ activities (Blanchard, 2003; Britton, 2021). Some of the acronym examples focused on the learning objective include WALT (We are learning to...), ICS (I can statements), or OLI (Our learning intention is...). Regarding the learning and assessment criteria and expectations, commonly used acronyms are WILF (What I am looking for) and SC (Success criteria). Furthermore, to reinforce understanding and reflection, teachers can use TIB (This is because...), KWL charts (What I know, What I want to know, What I’ve learned), WILL (What it looks like...), etc. Explicitly indicating learning objectives and success criteria can support the learning process since, as Harlen (2014) explains, students must understand the purpose of their work and be able to visualise what is good quality work. Additionally, teachers can employ different methods to offer feedback, either by observing

students during a task or providing feedback shortly after the task is completed (Britton, 2021). Some of the strategies that teachers use to provide feedback are colour coded comments, next steps, two stars and a wish, etc. Another effective strategy is the “Glow & Grow”¹, which focuses on strengths and areas of improvement, and can be used by the teacher to give feedback, but also as a self-reflection tool for students.

Feedback is one of the essential strategies in formative assessment. It has been defined as “information about the gap between the actual level and the reference level of a system parameter which is used to alter the gap in some way” (Ramaprasad, 1983, p. 4). The purpose of the formative assessment is to close this gap in order to enhance further learning. In addition, students need the opportunity to implement received feedback, as “the only effective feedback is that which is acted upon, so that feedback should be more work for the recipient than the donor” (Wiliam, 2013, p. 18).

Effective feedback provides constructive information and includes details about the learning process, rather than simply distinguishing right and wrong answers. It offers guidance on how to enhance performance and further learning, and refrains from making comparisons with other students, it is therefore focused on the individual (Harlen, 2014). Hattie and Timperley (2007) identify three essential questions that teachers and students should answer for effective feedback i.e., “Where am I going? (What are the goals?), How am I going? (What progress is being made toward the goal?), and Where to next? (What activities need to be undertaken to make better progress?)” (p. 86). Focus on continuous learning is therefore an essential aspect of formative assessment. As Skutil and Maněnová (2021) assert, formative feedback must involve more than giving information about performance, it needs to incorporate the formative component as well. The formative component entails students using information from the assessment to improve their learning (Petty, 2009).

On the other hand, **summative assessment** or AoL determines the level of knowledge attained at a certain point in time, usually at the end of an instructional period (Kolář & Šikulová, 2009; Petty, 2009). Summative assessment typically relies on teacher evaluations, tests, or a blend of both, and it entails assessing all students’ achievements using consistent criteria (Harlen, 2014). Unlike with formative assessment, where the information from assessment is integrated into the daily learning process, results of summative assessments are communicated at specific intervals, for example, as marks on report cards or the results of

¹ Glow represents the positive aspects and Grow focuses on the improvements.

official examinations (Kolář & Šikulová, 2009; Harlen, 2014). In general, AoL is connected to the attainment of broadly defined objectives rather than the specific aims of particular learning activities (Harlen, 2014).

Nevertheless, although it does not have a direct influence on the learning process, summative assessment can and should be used to support learning. AoL provides evidence of students' achievement and this evidence can be used to inform students' next teacher of their performance, to monitor individual students' learning, as well as the whole class progress (Harlen, 2014), and even initiate feedback that enhances learning and convey success criteria (Black & Wiliam, 2009). Furthermore, McMillan (2002) argues that this evidence has the potential to support teachers in identifying students' strengths and weaknesses, and this information can be used for tailoring further teaching.

One type of summative assessment that is commonly used in English-speaking countries, and also often used in international schools, is standards-based assessment. These assessments are designed by external organisations, they are uniformly delivered and evaluated (Wang et al., 2006), and they require that all students respond to identical questions in the same manner (GL Support, 2024). Typically, standardised tests are piloted with a large sample from the relevant population, thus allowing comparison of students' scores with the average score of their peers (Harlen, 2014). This kind of comparison is referred to as a norm-referenced test and allows for benchmarking students' progress against others. In this sense, the test result informs whether the student's performance is above or below the norm, but it does not provide information about the student's specific abilities or skills (Harlen, 2014). However, standardised tests also provide evidence on students' performance in relation to specific criteria or standards, and in this case, we are talking about criterion-referenced assessment.

Standardised tests can be regarded as a fairer assessment method, due to their standardised format, which minimises the likelihood of bias or subjective judgment. These assessments can help in identifying students' knowledge and abilities upon school entry, and they can also pinpoint students who require additional learning support (GL Support, 2024). On the other hand, the implementation of externally mandated standards raises critical considerations. Key issues include evaluating whether such standards diminish teacher independence and restrict student creativity and how beneficial it is for all students to be measured against a uniform set of standards (Wang et al., 2006). In addition, Mons (2009)

employs various research findings and concludes that the disadvantage of standardised assessments is that students tend to study for exams rather than learn with understanding, which can cause reduced motivation for learning. Also, these tests are followed by limitations reflected in the test reliability, as the students' performance can be influenced by fatigue, illness, or stress. Finally, some tests may be inaccessible to students with special education needs, while high-achieving students can earn top marks, which would not offer appropriate feedback about their actual performance (GL Support, 2024). It is important to use standardised tests cautiously, so as not to allow a negative impact. However, they can be a useful tool in education.

In conclusion, both formative and summative assessments are significant in the education process, and schools can benefit from using a combination of both types. For beneficial assessment results, the assessment function and purpose must be considered (Bennett, 2011; Wiliam, 2013). As Bennett (2011) argues, although the AfL has a primary formative function, it can also be used for summative purposes; and likewise, AoL has a primary summative purpose, but its secondary formative function should not be forgotten.

2.3.3 Other types of assessment

Some authors (Kolář & Šikulová, 2009; Nusche, 2013; Wiliam & Thompson, 2008) further refer to **diagnostic assessment**, also known as pre-assessment (Popham, 2017). This assessment type overlaps with the formative assessment but is usually conducted in the early phase of learning to create an appropriate learning plan (Nusche, 2013; Popham, 2017). However, diagnostic assessment, sometimes also referred to as assessing learners' needs, can be a continuous assessment practice (Petty, 2009). This type of assessment may also focus on the detection of learning difficulties in order to plan for appropriate student support. Petty (2009) convincingly argues that the information from this assessment must be used to address the students' needs, as "there is little point in diagnostic assessment if you do not use this information to improve their learning" (p. 534).

Additionally, a distinction is made between **internal** and **external assessment**, depending on whether the assessment is carried out by students' teachers or by experts outside of school (Kolář & Šikulová, 2009; Nusche, 2013). Nusche (2013) emphasises that both types of assessments can be used for a formative or summative purpose. Internal assessment, also referred to as school-based assessment, is prepared and evaluated by the students' teachers

and can also involve the students in the assessment process (Nusche, 2013). On the other hand, external or standardised assessments are prepared and evaluated outside the schools, they are uniform and can be used to compare students' achievement (Nusche, 2013).

Furthermore, school assessment can be **informal**, in case it is based on the observation of students' performance during regular classroom activities, or **formal**, which follows prior notice to the students that it will be carried out, thus allowing students to prepare for the evaluation (Kolář & Šikulová, 2009). Ruiz-Primo (2011) explains the informal assessment as a continuous process of evaluating students' learning during instruction. This type of assessment is usually spontaneous and non-standardised and typically includes assessment through classroom observation, questioning and discussion, reflections, and non-verbal evidence, such as body language (Ruiz-Primo, 2011). Informal assessment provides immediate feedback to teachers that helps meet individual student needs. Moreover, this type of assessment can promote self-reflection and students' awareness of their learning progress (Ruiz-Primo, 2011). On the other hand, formal assessments are generally considered fairer due to their clear criteria and reduced potential for bias. However, this type of assessment can cause stress, hindering performance for some students, and can also lead to studying for the test without genuine understanding. Ruiz-Primo (2011) states the benefits of combining informal assessment with formal types of assessment, namely, acquiring a comprehensive understanding of students' learning.

Kolář and Šikulová (2009) also mention **interim assessment**, which is described as a partial evaluation of the student's level of achievement that the teacher has gained over a longer period. This type of assessment is used to evaluate students' progress and adjust the teaching process in response to students' needs (Shepard et al., 2017). Further, another type worth mentioning is the **final (terminal) assessment**, which is described as an evaluation of the student's final level of achievement, that is carried out at the end of a course or a complete programme of work (Kolář & Šikulová, 2009). Alternatively, **continuous assessment** is conducted throughout the course. This type of assessment provides feedback that can be used to enhance teaching and learning, and the outcome here is based on evidence collected during the learning period (McAlpine, 2002).

Finally, McAlpine (2002) draws attention to a growing focus on skills and abilities over knowledge in the education process. The author distinguishes between **product-based assessments**, which assess the product of student learning i.e., the gained knowledge, and

process-based assessments, which focus on the learning process, and skills and abilities involved in it. In practice, however, most assessments combine elements of both approaches.

2.3.4 Student-centred assessments

In recent years, there has been a growing interest in the development of alternative approaches to educational assessment that focus specifically on the students and their needs. **Authentic assessment** is one of the alternative ways to measure and assess students' knowledge and skills. Kolář and Šikulová (2009) explain that authentic assessment is performed in realistic situations and focuses on tasks relevant to practical life (e.g., products, exhibits, or practical activities). Similarly, Mueller (2018) describes authentic assessment as students' evaluation of performing meaningful tasks that demonstrate their ability to apply the knowledge and skills to real life. The purpose of this form of assessment can be seen in preparing students for life and challenges after graduation.

Another alternative approach to assessment emphasises the collection of student work in a portfolio. A **portfolio assessment** represents an assessment based on a collection of different products created by the student and other records about the student e.g., different projects, artwork, exhibits, written work, worksheets, etc. (Kolář & Šikulová, 2009). Portfolios should be customised by the students to demonstrate their individual work styles. Moreover, it is important to update the portfolios as the student's achievements and skills grow. Portfolios should be used by teachers in assessing students' achievement and improvement in different learning areas, and they further lead to empowering students to assess their progress and set appropriate goals (Tierney et al., 1991). The authors state that portfolio assessment helps in engaging students to reflect on their work and to take part in the assessment process, and it is thereby regarded as a collaborative assessment method. This type of assessment evaluates students' performance with respect to individual differences between students. Portfolios have a great assessment potential that is often not used to the full extent, at least in Czech schools (Skutil & Maněnová, 2021).

Following, Kolář & Šikulová (2009) emphasise the importance of **autonomous assessment**, which is entrusted to the student. According to the authors, for autonomous assessment to be successful, prior preparation of students is needed, in order to learn how to assess their work gradually, how to evaluate the work of their peers, and how to effectively comment on the teaching. The autonomous assessment is often carried out through whole-

class and small-group meetings, allowing students to reflect on their work. Some useful tools that promote autonomous assessment are above mentioned mastery learning, contract learning, and portfolios.

Furthermore, many schools are starting to encourage students to reflect on their work, in order to evaluate it and enhance their learning, primarily through **self-assessment** and **peer assessment**.

The self-assessment process helps students reflect on their learning and understand its purpose (Weeden et al., 2002). According to the authors, self-assessment encourages students to be more involved in their learning process and responsible for their own learning, to understand their achievements, and to be able to improve them. Rather than assessment of learning, the self-assessment is associated with assessment for learning. When students are encouraged to critically evaluate and reflect on their own work, assessment can play a significant role in their learning and growth (Büyükkarcı, 2014). On the other hand, without proper preparation, students may focus on the formal mistakes in their work instead of meaningfully reflecting on their learning (Skutil & Maněnová, 2021).

Closely linked to self-assessment is the peer assessment. Peers can effectively assess each other's work, particularly when the emphasis is on providing constructive feedback for improvement rather than assigning grades (Wiliam, 2013). It is, however, essential to pre-teach skills such as constructive feedback, and, when the peer assessment is going to be shared in a group, skills as active listening, taking turns, and collaborating (Black et al., 2004).

3 Middle childhood development

Middle childhood marks a significant phase of developmental growth that occurs between the ages of 6 and 12. In that regard, the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) refers to primary education as a compulsory education for children typically between 6 and 12, followed by lower secondary education, which is also compulsory in most countries (UNESCO, 2012). This generally aligns with the school system in the Czech Republic, where the compulsory education starts around the age of 6 and lasts for 9 years (Portál veřejné správy, 2025).

In addition to physical growth and development during this stage, children also experience significant changes in their cognitive and social and emotional development. Additionally, children during middle childhood typically start to discover new interests, like sports, hobbies, culture, etc. Games also have an important place in middle childhood development, as children start choosing more complex and challenging games. Collins (1984) describes ages between 6 and 12 as “a distinctive period between major developmental transition points” (p. 1). Middle childhood introduces new developmental challenges in physical, cognitive, social and emotional aspects, as well as cultural identity (Charlesworth et al., 2008). The transition from early to middle childhood marks a significant change in cognitive abilities, motivation, and social behaviour, and these changes fundamentally influence children’s personality development (DelGiudice, 2018). Parents and teachers play a vital role in supporting children’s healthy development by providing positive reinforcement, encouraging healthy habits, and fostering positive peer relationships.

3.1 Physical and cognitive development during middle childhood

Middle childhood is a period in human development from prepubescence, a phase before the onset of puberty-related physiological changes, to pubescence, when children start undergoing gradual physical changes linked to puberty (Charlesworth et al., 2008). Biologically, middle childhood aligns with juvenility, a stage of increasing independence, where intense learning through play helps develop crucial social and survival skills (DelGiudice, 2018).

The physical growth during this period continues steadily, albeit more slowly compared to early childhood (Blatný, 2017; Charlesworth et al., 2008), and children of the same age may differ significantly in height, weight, and maturity. Typical for this

developmental period is the improvement of the fine and gross motor skills (Blatný, 2017; Charlesworth et al., 2008), reflected in improved balance and body coordination. Moreover, during middle childhood, the development of the brain and nervous system remains highly flexible, and this is referred to as brain plasticity (Blatný, 2017; DelGiudice, 2018). Plasticity indicates that the brain can change in response to experience. Therefore, it is important to provide diverse and positive stimuli for children's healthy brain development.

Furthermore, this is a period of rapid cognitive development, and children continue to expand their knowledge and understanding of the world around them. Children's ability to monitor and control their cognitive processes, also known as metacognition, develops significantly (Blatný, 2017). Thus, children gain greater awareness of their memory and thinking process, and this awareness improves their ability to learn and solve problems effectively (Blatný, 2017; Langmeier & Krejčířová, 1998). Most children develop cognitive abilities early in middle childhood. This helps them express more elaborate thoughts, which leads to the increased complexity of learning (Charlesworth et al., 2008; Langmeier & Krejčířová, 1998). They also develop stronger language and communication skills and become more adept at reading, writing, and speaking (Langmeier & Krejčířová, 1998). Thanks to this development, primary school children are gradually introduced to more complex topics at school.

Additionally, children in this age group become more skilled at problem-solving, critical thinking, and logical reasoning, and they develop a greater ability to understand abstract concepts and ideas (Langmeier & Krejčířová, 1998). However, as Piaget and Inhelder (1969/2000) explain, even this logical reasoning is related only to concrete phenomena and contents that can be visualised. According to the authors, the beginning of school age is the period of transition from demonstrative (intuitive) thinking to the stage of concrete operations, and in this stage, intelligence is demonstrated through logical and systematic interpretation of concrete objects.

Children's thinking and attitudes to reality during middle childhood were also characterised in literature by the term realism (Langmeier & Krejčířová, 1998). According to the authors, children are interested in what reality is like, they want to know it in detail and objectively. This is the difference from the previous periods, but also from the following adolescence, when fantasy and dreaming have a more prominent role. School-age children's focus on realism can be observed in their speech, drawings, written expression, reading

interests, as well as in their play. This realism is at first dependent on the authoritative figures (parents, teachers, etc.), and only later does the child become more critical and their approach to the world becomes critically realistic (Langmeier & Krejčířová, 1998). Similarly, Vágnerová (2001) asserts that the thinking process of younger schoolchildren is realistic and logic-bound, and she draws a distinction from the previous developmental stage in saying that school-age children are less egocentric in their knowledge.

Education significantly influences children's cognitive development during middle childhood, as they attend school during these formative years. Children's physical growth and cognitive development are closely linked to changes in their psychological and social environment (Blatný, 2017). Physical development influences children's self-perception and peer relationships, as the children typically compare themselves to others (Charlesworth et al., 2008). In that sense, it is essential to support children during this developmental period and help them build healthy self-esteem.

3.2 Social and emotional development during middle childhood

Social and emotional growth is another significant aspect of middle childhood development. Middle childhood is a foundational stage for developing self-esteem and the motivational components that shape personality (Blatný, 2017). Children at this age continue to develop their sense of self and begin to form their own identity, they become increasingly independent and self-reliant (Collins, 1984). The author adds that children also become more aware of social norms and expectations, which helps them navigate social situations effectively. During middle childhood, children develop the skills to understand other people, and they typically improve their communication skills, with the motivation to be understood by others (Collins, 1984).

Emotional development and the ability to self-regulate also increase rapidly during the school years. As children grow, they improve at recognising and managing their emotions, which helps them handle peer conflicts. This progress is seen in improved anger management, coping with frustration, and reduced anger outbursts and other behavioural issues (Blatný, 2017; Collins, 1984). In addition to recognising their own emotions, children also learn to acknowledge and appropriately respond to feelings of people around them (Charlesworth et al., 2008; Feldman, 2003).

Along with recognising and managing emotions, the way children express their emotions changes significantly during middle childhood. Langmeier and Krejčířová (1998) observe that, at this age, children are able to express their feelings clearly, since they already understand their own feelings and are more aware of the social environment. During middle childhood, children learn that feelings, wishes, or motives can also be hidden from the environment, and they can suppress the expression of their feelings in some situations (Langmeier & Krejčířová, 1998). Appropriate expression and regulation of emotions support children's healthy functioning and influence differences in children's temperament and personality (Feldman, 2003). Emotional expression and regulation are closely linked to children's social interactions and relationships with others, as children start understanding when and with whom it is appropriate to share their emotions (Feldman, 2003). It is therefore important to acknowledge that cultural norms can influence children's emotional development, as the acceptance of emotional expression varies across cultures (Blatný, 2017; Charlesworth et al., 2008).

Collins (1984) asserts that children during middle childhood learn to understand that people can experience two different emotions simultaneously, and they learn to organise their emotions into abstract categories in order to interpret behaviour. Through integration into society, children start understanding how society influences behaviour, they become aware of the advantages of behaving according to the social rules and learn how to regulate their behaviour, and thus coregulation occurs (Collins, 1984). As a result, children more frequently begin to take responsibility, help others, and behave according to the rules. As children grow, they learn to understand their own and other people's thinking, feelings, and behaviour.

Furthermore, middle childhood is characterised by increased moral development, and the children show deeper curiosity about social norms and moral issues (Charlesworth et al., 2008). It has been argued that cognitive development governs children's ability to understand moral norms and values and to act accordingly (Langmeier & Krejčířová, 1998). The authors draw conclusions based on Piaget's theory of cognitive development and assert that children during middle childhood become autonomous in their ability to distinguish right actions from wrong, and they also begin questioning adult perspectives of moral judgment and behaviour. While moral development may seem natural, children need positive conditions and interactions to develop strong emotional and social skills.

According to Collins (1984), a great distinction in middle childhood as compared to earlier stages of development is that the role of family, although still very important, becomes less predominant in a child's socialisation process. Besides the family, school is a main place for social interactions for children this age, as they spend most of their time in school. The school thus has a great influence on children's cognitive and social development. In addition to family members, children develop significant social interactions with teachers, peers, coaches, etc., and those interactions further influence children's development. Consequently, different social roles and positions in the peer group lead to the development of a more conscious self-concept and self-esteem (Langmeier & Krejčířová, 1998). The authors add that school-age children start focusing on personality traits, rather than only on objective characteristics. Collins (1984) further states that self-reflection significantly progresses at this age level, and children also begin to develop the ability to observe themselves from the other-person perspective.

During middle childhood, children typically advance in the concept of self-awareness, develop their individuality, and further discover their place in society (Collins, 1984). The ability to learn new information and apply it to thinking and action increases during middle childhood, with attending school as the primary formal setting for the promotion of academic knowledge and social and cultural norms (Collins, 1984).

3.3 The role of school in middle childhood development

A child's entry into school is an important life milestone that marks a significant change in their lifestyle and social relationships. During middle childhood, children experience new social contacts with other children and teachers, as well as a variety of settings, and their relationships with peers become increasingly important. They develop a sense of belonging to a group and may engage in more complex social interactions. However, children can also experience conflicts with their peers and thus begin to develop skills for resolving conflicts and negotiating with others (Blatný, 2017). They may also become more sensitive to the needs and feelings of others, which can contribute to greater empathy and compassion (Collins, 1984). Through interactions with peers, children acquire important social skills, including helping others, solidarity, empathy, and cooperation, but also competitiveness (Langmeier & Krejčířová, 1998). It is worth noting that negative peer relationships or a lack of relationships with peers can affect children's development negatively.

Furthermore, the school obligations of the child are seen as social responsibilities that cannot be neglected. The child at this stage takes on a new social role and gains the status of a student. Alongside the role of the student, the child acquires another role of a classmate and a friend, and in addition learns about the complementary role of the teacher (Langmeier & Krejčířová, 1998; Collins, 1984).

3.3.1 Learning process in middle childhood

As the cognitive abilities develop during middle childhood, children improve in maintaining attention and focus for longer periods (Blatný, 2017; Charlesworth et al., 2008; DelGiudice, 2018). This change is significant for successful learning at school.

Petty (2009) suggests that there are two types of learners, active learners, who take responsibility for their learning, and the learners who see learning as something that is out of their control, referred to as passive learners. While passive learners tend to justify unsuccessful learning by external factors like intelligence or talent, teacher competence, etc., active learners take on an empowered approach, they are focused on improvement rather than perfection (Petty, 2009). Educators should work towards encouraging students to become active learners in order to be academically successful. The author mentions some useful strategies for active learners, such as independent learning, mastery learning, students setting their own targets, questions that require thinking about the subject, self-assessment, etc. Similarly, Wiliam (2013) emphasises the importance of students' active engagement in learning. The author further asserts that students become passive and disengaged when they believe that they will fail, and they tend to see learning and assessment as a way of proving their failure. It is therefore essential to create a safe learning environment where students are encouraged to try their best and are not afraid to make mistakes.

Moreover, Dweck (2016) indicates that success is largely influenced by our own beliefs about our talents and abilities. She distinguishes between two types of mindsets – fixed mindset, or the belief that people's abilities are predetermined, and growth mindset, which is explained as the belief that everyone can improve with hard work, effort, and help from others. In this regard, resilience, or the ability to address challenges with a positive attitude, is identified as an essential aspect for success in life (Yeager & Dweck, 2012). Dweck (2015) further asserts that effort is an important aspect in the growth mindset, albeit not the only resource. Students should be taught a range of strategies to achieve a growth mindset, such as

positive and encouraging beliefs, using other people as invaluable resources to give feedback, etc. For the feedback to be effective, it must be constructive and directed to the efforts, work, or strategies the students are using, rather than a simple praise of their talents or intelligence.

Following, it has been argued that for successful lifelong learning, students should actively engage in their learning, they should be involved in deciding on their learning targets, and be motivated to learn (Broadfoot et al., 1999). Petty (2009) highlights some of the reasons that can motivate students, such as improved self-esteem as a result of successful learning, being accepted by the teacher, peers, or family members, getting consequences for unsuccessful learning, and participating in fun learning activities. The author states that these are known as short-term motivators in learning. Students can also be motivated by long-term goals, for example, when they are learning about something they find useful. However, short-term motivators seem to be much more effective in middle childhood (Petty, 2009).

According to Black and Wiliam (1998), students achieve the best results when motivated intrinsically, when they are learning something that is meaningful and has a personal value for them. Blanchard (2003) notes that making individual learning targets helps students become motivated and engaged in their learning. This approach gives students ownership of their learning, and it is therefore a crucial task for teachers. Britton (2021) argues that for a successful learning process, teachers should provide scaffolding to individual learners to support them in achieving the lesson objectives, and in addition, the objectives themselves could be adjusted to better suit the needs of different students.

3.3.2 Assessment in relation to middle childhood development

The development that occurs during middle childhood is closely linked to the assessment process in schools. Just as physical development can affect a child's ability to participate in certain physical activities, cognitive development also plays a significant role in educational assessment. Children during middle childhood are able to use problem-solving, critical thinking, and abstract reasoning, unlike in earlier developmental stages. Another important aspect of educational assessment is the social and emotional development. Children who can efficiently manage their emotions and their social interactions typically perform better in group projects or assignments that require collaboration. Alternatively, children who struggle with these skills may need extra support to participate fully in the

assessment process. Educators need to consider different assessment methods, such as peer or self-assessments, to accommodate different social and emotional abilities.

Students' progress and school results are evaluated by teachers, parents, and classmates, and consequently, the children start to evaluate themselves, depending on how others evaluate them (Charlesworth et al., 2008; Čáp & Mareš, 2007). The assessment process affects the child in many ways, especially their self-concept and self-esteem, and it is, therefore, a crucial tool in education. Providing supportive feedback during middle childhood helps children form a positive self-evaluation and improves their self-esteem and self-confidence. A study has shown that effective feedback focuses on clarifying interpretations in order to help understanding, whereas feedback connected to praise, rewards, and punishment was found ineffective (Hattie & Timperley, 2007).

Langmeier and Krejčířová (1998) state that self-assessment in children typically becomes more stable after the age of eight. The authors assert that educational self-assessment often decreases during middle childhood, as children start comparing themselves with others. They also warn that comparisons with others can lead to low self-esteem in students, thus resulting in lower motivation and consequently in decreasing the quality of school performance. Furthermore, Charlesworth et al. (2008) draw attention to the norm-referenced assessment as a type of assessment that can likely cause negative effects on students' self-evaluation by comparing them to their peers.

To support children with positive self-evaluation, schools can expand the activities they offer in order to encourage students to find successful areas (Charlesworth et al., 2008). In that regard, schools can also assess students in different areas and, in that way, show them that there are many different ways to be successful. For example, one significant way in which schools can encourage positive self-evaluation is portfolio assessment. Additionally, considering diverse learning styles and preferences, assessment should be adapted to meet students' diverse learning needs through group projects, discussions, presentations, etc.

Effective assessment goes beyond being a tool to evaluate student progress, it is an integral part of learning that influences student motivation (McMillan, 2002). For an effective teaching and assessment process, it is important that teachers understand how students learn. It has been argued that successful learning requires coordination between curriculum, instruction, and assessment process (Jiao & Lissitz, 2022; Shepard et al., 2017). Furthermore, this coordination should be supported by the research on the learning process, as "assessment

which is explicitly designed to promote learning is the single most powerful tool we have for both raising standards and empowering lifelong learners” (Broadfoot et al., 1999, p. 2). This system can be presented on the following alignment triangle (Jiao & Lissitz, 2022)

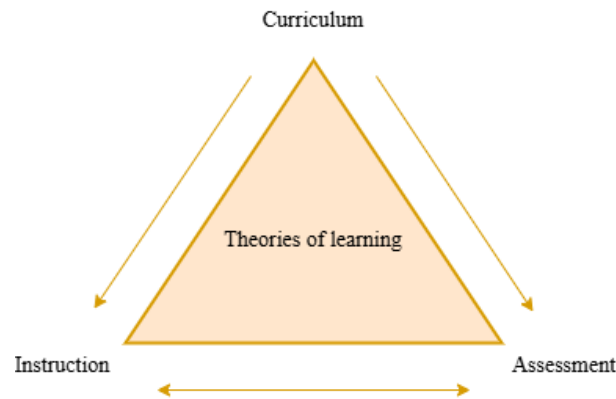


Figure 2 Curriculum-Instruction-Assessment alignment triangle

The developmental changes that occur during middle childhood have important implications for the assessment process in schools. Educators need to take into account the physical, social, emotional, and cognitive abilities of their students when designing and implementing assessments to ensure that they are developmentally appropriate and fair. Teachers have an essential role in the learning and assessment process, as knowing the students helps teachers make informed decisions to support learning, and moreover, students tend to accept the assessment feedback and use it when they trust their teacher (Wiliam, 2013).

4 Methodology

The following chapter describes the methodology used in this thesis. First, the research objective and research questions are stated. Following, the choice of the research method is outlined, including the selection of the data collection technique and data analysis method. Then, the process of conducting the study is described. The research sample and the reasons for its choice are set out, followed by a description of the conduct of interviews and the data analysis process. Finally, the limitations of the study are discussed, as well as the ethical considerations.

4.1 Research objective and research questions

The main objective of the present thesis is to explore international primary school teachers' perspectives on assessment practices. In accordance with the research objective, the following research questions are posed:

RQ1: What are teachers' rationales for choosing certain types of assessments?

RQ2: What are teachers' perceptions of the role of assessment in student learning?

RQ3: How do teachers adapt their assessment practices to accommodate students in a diverse learning environment?

4.2 Choice of the research method

The qualitative research method is often used in the field of educational research. While quantitative research is based on positivism and “embodies a view of social reality as an external, objective reality”, one of the main features of qualitative research is that it focuses on “the ways in which individuals interpret their social world” (Bryman, 2012, p. 36). This method is used to answer questions such as ‘how’ or ‘what’, and to offer a deeper understanding of the problem (Creswell, 1998). Qualitative research focuses on people's opinions and experiences and involves subjectivity from both the respondents and researchers (Hammersley, 2013; Leung, 2015). The researcher in the qualitative study is seen as an active learner who aims to tell the participants' story (Creswell, 1998) and explore their beliefs and reasons for certain actions (Švaříček & Šed'ová, 2010).

This thesis studies teachers' opinions, beliefs, and experiences about the assessment process in international schools in Prague. The primary focus of this research is not on the objective effects of assessment but on the teachers' perspectives on the topic. Since this thesis strives to enable a deeper understanding of assessment practices in international schools, the qualitative research method has been chosen. The participants' responses are fundamental for answering the research questions and are not easily quantifiable. Therefore, this is a small-scale study that aims to delve deeper into participants' experiences.

4.2.1 Choice of data collection technique

The most common data collection methods in qualitative research are focus groups, observations, and interviews. Focus groups consist of interviewing a group of participants to gather qualitative data. The group dynamic in focus groups can be an advantage if the participants expand on each other's responses and develop ideas together (Bryman, 2012). On the other hand, it can also create the group effect, where not every participant gets to express their opinion fully (Bryman, 2012; Busetto et al., 2020). In addition, the participants are more likely to express more conventional viewpoints in a group setting (Bryman, 2012), thus distorting the information gathered. Participant observations can also be useful for collecting qualitative data, as the researcher obtains direct experience with the participants and can document information in real time (Creswell, 2014). However, observations can be intrusive in people's lives by taking up significantly more time than interviews (Bryman, 2012). The present study focuses on teachers' opinions, beliefs, and experiences, which would be difficult to capture through observations and focus groups.

Besides being less time-consuming for the participants, interviews also serve as a tool to get a deeper understanding of people's thinking and reasoning. The interview is regarded as a guided conversation (Lichtman, 2023) with an interactive and responsive character (Hammersley, 2013). Qualitative interviews offer a unique account from the respondent's perspective (Novotná et al., 2019), which is difficult to gain using other data collection methods. Since this study aims to explore teachers' perspectives on assessment, their rationales for choosing certain types of assessment, and their opinions on the topic, semi-structured interviews were chosen to collect the data.

The semi-structured interview is characterised by a partly prepared structure. This means that the interviewer prepares the interview guide i.e., a list of questions or topics to talk

about in the interview (Bryman, 2012; Busetto et al., 2020; Novotná et al., 2019). While giving some structure to the interview flow, the semi-structured interviews also provide a certain amount of freedom both for the researcher and the participant. Therefore, the interviewer can ask additional questions that were not planned or omit questions that have been answered by the participant (Bryman, 2012; Lichtman, 2023; Novotná et al., 2019; Oun & Bach, 2014). The interviewees have the freedom to express their thoughts and can ask for clarification (Bryman, 2012; Novotná et al., 2019). This flexibility reduces the risk of misunderstanding between the researcher and the respondent (Novotná et al., 2019). Semi-structured interview is a suitable method for this study, as it provides the structure to explore the research questions while also offering flexibility and the opportunity to be open to new ideas that can emerge during the interviews.

4.2.2 Choice of data analysis method

Qualitative research relies on meaningful data interpretation in order to answer the research questions (Hendl, 2016). There are many different ways to analyse data in qualitative research. The suitable method should be chosen in accordance with the research objective (Holloway & Todres, 2003). According to Hendl (2016), thematic analysis is an appropriate qualitative data analysis method for research questions related to people's opinions and experiences. Thematic analysis is a flexible qualitative analysis method that can provide invaluable data for answering the research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2006). As the present study aims to explore teachers' beliefs, opinions, and experiences related to the assessment process, thematic analysis has been chosen as a method to analyse data. Using thematic analysis, the researcher identifies, interprets, and presents patterns drawn from the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

4.3 Conducting the study

4.3.1 Selection of respondents

Purposive sampling is often used in qualitative research to ensure that the research sample is relevant to the main objective of the study and the research questions (Bryman, 2012). Since this thesis studies international primary teachers' perspectives, three of Prague's most renowned international primary schools were purposefully selected. The primary schools' principals were addressed with a request to provide contacts for two primary teachers

from their school who would be willing to participate in the study. The inclusion criteria were that the teachers work at the international school for at least one year and that they do not teach the same year level. These criteria were set to get variety in the research sample. The newly qualified teachers were excluded from the study since the research requires participants to draw on their teaching experiences.

The respondents were therefore two teachers from each school, six altogether. The teachers had a range of primary teaching experience, spanning from 4 to 29 years. This diversity should bring a more complex view to the problem. Also, they varied in the year levels they currently teach, two participants teach year 1, one participant year 2, one participant year 3, and two participants year 6 (see Table 1 for details about the participants). To maintain the confidentiality of the participants, all data that could lead to identification have been anonymised, including their workplace. Since age and gender are not relevant for this study, this information was not asked. The teachers are marked with numbers from 1 to 6 (hereafter also T1-6).

Teacher (T)	Year level taught	Years of experience in primary education	Years of experience in international schools
1	Year 1	10 years	6 years
2	Year 6	14 years	10 years
3	Year 6	29 years	29 years
4	Year 3	23 years	13 years
5	Year 1	15 years	5 years
6	Year 2	4 years	4 years

Table 1 Presentation of the participants

4.3.2 Conducting the interviews

Interviews are commonly used to collect data in qualitative research. One of the reasons for this is that the interview is experienced as a conversation, which feels natural to people (Oun & Bach, 2014). However, conducting an effective interview is a demanding task that depends on adequate preparation. Firstly, coordinating practical arrangements is necessary, for example, securing a quiet and comfortable place to conduct the interview,

preparing recording equipment, coordinating schedules with participants, etc. Moreover, this preparation requires a certain level of theoretical and methodological knowledge, and an active role of the interviewer to understand the participants' perspective and follow up with relevant questions (Bryman, 2012; Novotná et al., 2019). In addition, a pilot study can help with testing the interview flow and improving the researcher's interviewing skills (Bryman, 2012).

Before conducting the interviews for this research, a pilot study was implemented. The pilot study consisted of two interviews with two international primary school teachers, who were not part of the main interview process. Participants in the pilot study were recruited through the international school where the author of the thesis has worked. The purpose of the pilot study was to evaluate the clarity and relevance of the interview questions. After the pilot interviews, the original interview questions were revised and edited to ensure better understanding and more accurate responses.

The next step was contacting the principals of the selected international primary schools in Prague. All three principals were responsive and have each provided contacts for two teachers at their school willing to participate in the study. Following this, the teachers were contacted by email. Taking into account that transparency and trustworthiness are important when contacting the potential respondents (Novotná et al., 2019), the purpose of the research was shared with them, and they were informed of the expected length of the interview (approximately 45 minutes). Since teachers' schedules tend to be busy, they were asked to choose the most convenient time and place for conducting the interviews. They were also provided with the informed consent form, which all the participants signed before conducting the interview (see Appendix 1). The interview questions were not shared with the participants before conducting the interview. In general, participants tend to give more honest responses if not previously prepared, and, as the interview questions did not check for any prior knowledge, there was no need for the interviewees to be familiar with the questions and prepare for the interview.

There were six interviews in total, and all the interviews were conducted in October 2024. The interviews were conducted in person, all on the school premises where the teachers work, at the individual preference of the participants. Interviews were conducted in English. A set of predetermined questions was brought to each interview to guide the conversation (see Appendix 2). At the beginning of each interview, the purpose of the thesis was set out, the

participant was thanked for their participation, and they were reminded that their participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw from the interview at any time. This was done to build a rapport with the respondents and to maintain trustworthiness, as Novotná et al. (2019) suggest. First, the respondents were asked background questions regarding their experience teaching and using assessments. Following, they were asked a set of questions related to each of the three research questions identified in this study. Finally, they were asked follow-up questions to gain additional information in their assessment practices and to ensure there was space for respondents to share any information they considered important for the topic that they might not have had the opportunity to share throughout the interview session. As the semi-structured character of interviews suggests, the natural flow of discussion allowed for further questions and topics to be discussed. In addition, depending on the respondents' answers, some questions were asked in a slightly different order, while some questions were omitted if they had clearly been answered by the respondent. Each interview session took between 25 and 65 minutes. All the interviews were audio recorded with the permission of the participant.

4.3.3 *Data analysis*

Thematic analysis is used as a data processing method in this thesis. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), this method has six phases: familiarising with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report.

To analyse the data, all recorded interviews have been transcribed. Transcription is a time-consuming task that usually takes five to six hours for every hour of the interview (Bryman, 2012; Novotná et al., 2019). For better time efficiency, interviews were transcribed using a transcription tool - OpenAI Whisper. The transcribed interviews consist of 35,000 words or approximately 70 pages. After completing the transcriptions, all the information from the transcription tool was deleted. To ensure accuracy, transcriptions were reviewed by repeatedly listening to the audio recordings and editing the transcribed texts accordingly. Careful listening to the interview recordings and checking the transcriptions allowed for closer data exploration in the initial phase. After transcribing, repeated reading of the transcription texts and taking initial notes are also part of the first phase identified by Braun and Clarke.

The next phase is generating initial codes. This meant identifying and labelling all the interview segments that are significant for the research. Following this process, the identified codes were further grouped into categories or potential themes (phase 3). This thematic organisation allowed for a deeper understanding of the relationships between codes. In the next phase, the themes were further reviewed to ensure they are supported by the coded interview segments and that they accurately reflect all collected data. The themes were then defined and named (phase 5). Finally, the last phase is producing the written report, which is presented in the next chapter of this thesis. During this step of thematic analysis, the identified themes were organised around the three research questions of this study. The interview data in this thesis were analysed using the ATLAS.ti software (see Appendix 3 for the coding example).

4.4 Limitations and other considerations

Since qualitative research largely focuses on people's feelings, opinions, and experiences, the respondents' and researchers' subjectivity cannot be omitted. While quantitative research regards subjectivity as an unwanted bias, this is not the case in qualitative studies. Subjectivity in qualitative research is often seen as a necessity, perhaps even an asset (Hammersley, 2013; Leung, 2015; Lichtman, 2023). Thematic analysis is based on the researcher's active role in interpreting the data and identifying themes of interest (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Although the qualitative research process is not objective by nature, there are certain principles to assess its quality. The first step is accepting our ideological background, which can cause biases. As an international educator, the author of the thesis was considerate of her personal biases and predictions throughout the interview process, as well as during the data analysis. As Lichtman (2023) suggests, through self-reflection, the author tried to be sensitive to personal factors, such as opinions, beliefs, and experiences with assessment, while planning and conducting the research.

Consistency is another important aspect of ensuring the quality of the research (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Leung, 2015). During the data collection process, each participant was asked the same fundamental questions, and the open-ended questions were asked to reduce the particular biases of the author of the thesis. Following the interview process, data were transcribed and analysed in the same manner, allowing for consistency throughout the

process. Complying with Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step guide to thematic analysis, data were analysed and reviewed to develop reliable codes and themes.

Respondents' openness and honesty during the interviews cannot be guaranteed or measured. However, the likelihood of getting genuine responses in the interview process was increased by building rapport with the participants and transparent communication. Moreover, to ensure that the authenticity of their responses is not compromised, the interview questions were not shared with the participants before the interview.

Another way to reduce limitations is by conducting a pilot study. In this thesis, the pilot interviews were conducted in order to increase the clarity of the interview questions and reduce the misunderstandings between the interviewer and the respondents, to provide practice to the interviewer, and therefore improve the interview flow.

Finally, generalisations were not encouraged during this study. This is a small sample research that explores teachers' perspectives in three international schools in Prague, and it has no ambition of being representative of all international schools. Nevertheless, this thesis' focus on a smaller sample size enables a deeper understanding of the problem.

4.5 Research ethics

Research ethics are an inseparable part of any research, especially if it involves participants. While there are no strict rules, every researcher has the responsibility of ensuring all the ethical aspects of their research (Švaříček & Šed'ová, 2010). One of the main research ethics standards is to ensure that researchers act "within an ethic of respect for all persons – including themselves – involved in or affected by the research they are undertaking" (BERA, 2024, p. 11).

This research is based on interviews with teachers. The participants were provided with information about the interview process and their participation, including their right to withdraw from the interview at any time. The informed consent form was shared in a soft copy with participants, and all the participants signed the hard copy of the informed consent form before the interview. Informed consent has two ethical aspects: voluntary consent to participate in the study and thorough information about the purpose of the study (Skutil, 2011). Both aspects were respected in this thesis, all participants voluntarily took part in the study, and all were informed that the interview was about their opinions and experiences with the assessment in international primary education. This provided general and transparent

information about the research. The interviews were audio recorded, and all the participants agreed to it. Confidentiality is protected by anonymising all the information that could lead to participants' identification, including their names and school information. To ensure the participants' privacy, data was kept in a secure online storage, which is password protected. The final thesis will be available to the participants and the schools upon request.

5 Research findings and analysis

The following chapter presents the findings of this thesis, which explored the perspectives of international primary school teachers on assessment practices. The findings are organised around the three research questions that guided the study:

RQ1: What are teachers' rationales for choosing certain types of assessments?

RQ2: What are teachers' perceptions of the role of assessment in student learning?

RQ3: How do teachers adapt their assessment practices to accommodate students in a diverse learning environment?

Through thematic analysis, several key themes were identified from the interviews. Given the data-driven approach of the analysis, themes were generated inductively through coding and grouping of the related codes. To support the presentation of findings, direct quotes from participants are included throughout this chapter, allowing teachers' perspectives to be represented in their own words. The relationship between these findings and existing research will be considered further in the discussion chapter of this thesis.

5.1 Teachers' rationales for choosing certain types of assessments

Concerning the first research question, the following themes were identified from the data: using assessments to inform teaching, providing feedback to students, reporting to parents, and ensuring accountability in assessment practices.

5.1.1 Using assessments to inform teaching

This theme examines the ways teachers in international schools in Prague utilise assessments to inform their teaching practices. Assessment was often viewed as a tool for gaining insight into students' needs, understanding their progress, and planning the next steps in teaching.

All participants emphasised the value of using assessment results to respond to students' learning needs. Teachers particularly highlighted the importance of differentiated instruction over uniform, whole-class teaching approaches. One teacher remarked,

“We’re not teaching them what they already know. We’re trying to target kids with what they need and not making everybody do the same thing because it’s redundant” (teacher T4).

This quote demonstrates the teacher’s use of assessment to identify students’ learning needs and tailor instruction accordingly. It shows a commitment to personalised learning and using assessment data to respond to students’ needs. In this context, teachers’ ability to be flexible and adapt instruction based on assessment results is especially noteworthy. Assessment is thus viewed as an ongoing process that informs real-time decisions. The following extract from teacher T1 further illustrates this student-centred approach and emphasises the importance of flexibility in effective teaching.

“Sometimes children are going through the curriculum content quite quickly, and other times you suddenly feel that you’ve hit a block and you’re like - Oh god, they’re really struggling with this, so now we’re going to take much longer on that topic. And then you slow down your pace and just change. So it’s all about being adaptive and moving towards what the children can and can’t do” (teacher T1).

Furthermore, assessment was identified as a valuable tool for facilitating student grouping. Teachers T3, T4, and T6 explained that assessment results enable them to form groups based on students’ current abilities. As the participants stated, this allows for more targeted and responsive instruction. Teacher T6 emphasised that the formed groups should remain flexible, thus enabling students to move from one group to another as they progress and meet specified learning targets. Moreover, teachers T3 and T6 both acknowledged the need to differentiate even within these ability-based groups. This reinforces the idea that teachers view assessment not only as a tool for measuring learning but also as a means to individualise the teaching process and respond to students’ learning needs.

Pre-assessment was recognised as a useful assessment tool for informing further teaching. Teacher T3 explained this process further,

“In a math test, we’ve got three different sections. We give the same sort of pre-assessment, then we look at the data, and we talk about kids of concern, and not only kids of concern, the kids that are actually the high flyers as well. The kids who are really doing well, they need something else, so we’ve got to come up with sort of another plan for them. And there’s kind of the kids in the middle as well” (teacher T3).

This extract illustrates the importance teachers place on responding to the needs of all students, equally those who might need additional support and those who would benefit from a further challenge. In addition to using pre-assessments to determine students’ needs, teachers also emphasised the ongoing role of assessment throughout the teaching process and

at its conclusion. Assessment results are continuously used to inform and plan further teaching. For example, teacher T3 reflected on using exit tickets at the end of a lesson or taught unit as a way to check students' understanding and adjust teaching accordingly. In addition, one teacher explained how they use assessments throughout the lessons to inform further teaching.

“When I’m planning a lesson, I plan to have sort of three assessment points throughout the lesson. One is always towards the beginning to see what they already know, because there’s no point then continuing them on that learning if they’ve got it. That will tell me if they can instantly access the more challenging work. Also, it tells me if some children have no idea at all, then they’re the ones that will need some more guidance. Then I do it again in the middle of the lesson, sort of checking what they’re doing, asking questions, seeing if I need to alter the support. And then again at the end because there’s always these children that slip through the cracks, so again at the end you’re checking if they can answer a question, like apply it to something different” (teacher T1).

From this quote, it is evident that teacher T1 incorporates multiple assessment types that serve different purposes within a lesson. First, the initial assessment serves as a diagnostic tool to identify students' prior knowledge and prepare differentiated instruction. Then, the assessment during the lesson helps the teacher check for understanding and adjust the teaching as needed. Finally, the post-assessment can give valuable information about students' attainment of the lesson and help identify students who need additional support. This practice shows the significance of using assessment to identify and respond to students' learning needs.

Furthermore, teachers T2 and T6 explained that results from standardised assessments are also used to inform teaching in their classrooms. The teachers highlighted that these assessments provide a clearer picture of students' abilities when working independently. This allows teachers to identify specific gaps in knowledge and adjust instruction accordingly. They use various types of assessments, including pre-assessments, on-the-spot assessments, post-assessments, and even summative, standardised tests. From these extracts, it can be concluded that for teachers, the true value of assessments is evident when they are used in a formative way to inform further teaching and planning. Therefore, the formative function of different types of assessments is crucial in these teachers' teaching and assessment practices.

Finally, another important aspect raised by the participants in relation to this theme is the importance of considering the broader context of assessments. In this regard, assessment

can be viewed as an integral part of learning that ensures the instruction connects to students' previous knowledge. Teacher T4 explained the significance of understanding students' actual learning needs to provide for tailored support that effectively addresses those needs. This teacher noted,

“I believe that as a teacher, you need to know what comes before and what comes after. You need to know where they're coming from in order to know where they're going. And if everybody just randomly picked to teach whatever they felt like teaching... It's like building a house, isn't it? You don't have a foundation. So how are you going to build the walls, and how are you going to build the roof?” (teacher T4).

Across the interviews, teachers consistently described using assessment not only to measure student learning but also to guide their teaching decisions. This theme highlights how assessment is integrated into teaching practice. Rather than being seen only as an end-of-unit measurement, assessment was described as ongoing, flexible, and responsive to student needs. This suggests that in these international classrooms, assessment often functions as a formative process, closely connected to everyday teaching and learning processes.

5.1.2 Providing feedback to students

This theme explores the significance teachers place on providing information to students about their assessment results. Throughout the interviews, participants emphasised feedback as an essential tool for supporting student learning and guiding improvement. Teachers described using different feedback strategies, both verbal and written, formal and informal. For many participants, feedback was considered most effective when it was timely. Teachers T1, T5, and T6 particularly emphasised the benefits of instant feedback and making it understandable for young learners. As teacher T5 noted, “it just needs to be there and then” (teacher T5). Verbal feedback was described by some teachers as more effective than written. Besides teachers of young learners, teacher T2 also emphasised this,

“In a lesson, feedback, I try to do as much verbally as I can because I think it's more valuable, and they listen to the advice and they remember it better than if it's written down. In English, I find it really easy to give verbal feedback because we do a lot of reading out of our work. I will respond right there and then to somebody's sentences or ideas” (teacher T2).

Some teachers mentioned using colour coding as a tool for marking and feedback. As part of the marking policy in one school, teachers mark students' work using a pink and green

highlighter. Participants T5 and T6 explained that they highlight students' notable work in pink and areas for improvement in green². Both teachers reflected on this practice as a useful way to provide quick and meaningful feedback since the students are familiar with the method, and it is easily understandable even for younger learners. Teacher T6 noted,

“I think the pink and green for our little ones is just so obvious to them, like - What's pink is fine, I need to go back and look at what's marked green. So straight away, if something's green, they know they will get to do it again” (teacher T6).

Furthermore, teachers described not only giving feedback but also supporting students to engage with it and use it to guide their next steps. Teacher T2 shared,

“We have a marking policy, and we focus on targets to improve their work, so they usually look at that. They edit their own work. So I will mark in a green pen, they will use a purple pen to show that they have responded and done editing or corrections” (teacher T2).

This extract illustrates that the use of different colours for teacher and student input not only visually differentiates the stages of assessment but also reinforces collaboration. By responding to feedback and making corrections independently, students are taking an active role in their learning. Similarly, teacher T6 emphasised the importance of ongoing reflection and revision in the learning process. The following quote highlights the value of formative assessment in helping students reflect on their work, identify areas for improvement, and take responsibility for their learning.

“We try to remind them that they have to come back, their work's not finished after a lesson's done. We have targets in their books and then once a week we are planning to sit with them and go through their work for that week, looking at their targets and where they need to go back, where the green pen is, where they'll go back and check their work” (teacher T6).

Finally, many teachers shared awareness of the potential impact feedback can have on students' emotions and attitudes. Several participants described using instant feedback not only to inform students and engage them in learning, but also to reduce their anxiety around assessment and learning. This suggests that students benefit from ongoing feedback, as this practice helps them see learning as a process. One teacher reflected on this,

“You are kind of working with them as they're doing the work. So, you're like, Okay, this looks good. I'm going to highlight this one green; double-check that. And that

² A visual representation of this school's colour coding feedback policy (Tickled pink, Green for growth, and Purple for progress) can be seen in the Appendix 4

way it doesn't feel like a lot of pressure for the students, and I think that they don't realize that it's an assessment going on, but you're kind of assessing how much they know, and you can see, and then you can place them in the right spot there. So I find that useful because it's more ongoing, and I think it doesn't have that stigma of an assessment for the students, so, yeah, I think it's important, especially for the younger ages" (teacher T6).

Within teachers' rationales for choosing certain types of assessments, providing feedback to students is one of the key aspects of teachers' assessment practices. Teachers particularly valued the role of feedback in helping students understand their learning progress, reflect on it, and plan their next steps. This theme highlights that feedback in these classrooms is closely connected to formative assessment practices, serving to support students in the learning process.

5.1.3 Reporting to parents

Another important aspect of assessment is that it is used to inform parents of their children's learning and progress at school. This theme considers the benefits of maintaining positive relationships with students' families to ensure effective communication of assessment results.

Teachers described various formal and informal ways they share students' progress with parents, including report cards, parent-teacher conferences, email correspondence, and regular in-person communication. They emphasised the importance of informing parents about their children's learning. One teacher shared,

"All the assessments or reflections and things, we take pictures of them, the kids take pictures with their iPads and then they do a reflection and then we send it, so parents have access to it. Parents are always in the know at our school" (teacher T3).

Many participants reflected on the benefits of regularly sharing assessment results with parents, namely keeping parents, as the invested party in students' education, informed and strengthening home-school partnerships. Some teachers also mentioned that regular communication with parents is helpful both when students are struggling and when they are making progress in specific areas. This shows how assessment is used to encourage parent involvement in students' learning. In addition, teacher T2 drew attention to the importance of establishing and maintaining positive relationships with parents. According to this teacher, positive home-school partnerships help with transparent communication.

“It’s getting the balance between positive and constructive messages though because if you want to see a parent about things that you’re concerned about a lot, and you’ve not had that opportunity to build a good relationship with them with positive things just face to face, that can be a challenge if you’re going straight in with something that is a concern” (teacher T2).

Furthermore, the participants reflected on a challenge related to different parent expectations from assessments. Many teachers thought that these expectations are influenced by parents’ experience with education and assessments in general. This can become an obstacle in reporting assessment results to parents, and several teachers emphasised the importance of making assessment information clear and understandable for parents. Year 1 teachers further noted that assessments are not graded for young learners, and therefore, they typically communicate assessment results to parents by explaining students’ strengths and areas for growth rather than scores. This, according to the teachers, can be a challenge for some families to understand and accept. One teacher shared,

“In year one, we don’t share the scores with the parents, we just talk generally about how they’re coping with the curriculum, areas that they’re excelling in, areas that they need help in. We don’t tell them the scores, because a lot of them don’t perform too highly at this stage, because they’re brand new to English, brand new to the school setting, and it wouldn’t be fair really to say like Oh, they got one out of ten, when for them that’s maybe amazing, but parents won’t understand what that really means” (teacher T1).

This theme addresses informing students’ parents as an important factor in teachers’ assessment practices. Teachers reflected on some challenges they face in communication with parents, but also on the benefits of this communication. They emphasised the significance of maintaining open and positive dialogue and collaboration, making sure that families are engaged as partners in supporting student learning both at school and at home.

5.1.4 Ensuring accountability in assessment practices

When reflecting on their rationales for choosing certain types of assessments, teachers also discussed the need to ensure consistency, transparency, and accountability within the school. Participants shared that their assessment practices were partly shaped by school policies and reporting requirements. They noted that some assessment results are shared with the school management and other teachers involved in students’ learning. For some teachers, this was a particularly significant aspect of their teaching and assessment practice, which they

perceived as closely linked to the overall quality of education. That sentiment is shown in the following quote,

“The policies and curriculum guidelines that we have in place as a school are important for in terms of consistency and accountability of our teachers, so that we know that we’re doing a good job, we know that we are providing our children with what they need and that the quality of teaching is up to the standard that we require here” (teacher T2).

Many teachers also reflected on the significance of aligning assessments with the curriculum to ensure that students are assessed on the learning goals and standards they are expected to achieve. According to some teachers, this alignment supports the accurate tracking of student learning and progress, which helps maintain consistency. One teacher shared,

“All assessments that I do in my classroom are connected to the school curriculum. That’s very important for our school leadership, but for me as a teacher as well. Otherwise, it would be just random, wouldn’t it?” (teacher T4).

For many teachers, formal assessments are a useful tool for collecting objective data about student performance. This is seen as beneficial in providing clear evidence that can support teachers’ judgments and ensure assessment results are not based on teachers’ personal opinions. Some participants spoke about assessment as a form of accountability i.e., a way to provide evidence of progress and justify decisions about student achievement. One teacher shared how important this is for them,

“I personally do really value these formal assessments that I can really see and track data. So from my role and my background, I’ve always been used to using data and tracking. So I’m constantly looking at numbers and spreadsheets and trying to find trends. I like to see that uphill climb, and if there is some kind of waiver in the graph, that then indicates to me. But that’s how I work, so I like the visual way of seeing the quantity; the quantifying data means something to me” (teacher T2).

This theme examined how teachers perceive assessment as a tool for maintaining accountability and consistency in decision-making. While teachers did value flexibility and adapting assessments to their students, they also recognised the importance of aligning with school-wide practices and respecting school assessment policies. This balance between professional autonomy and institutional consistency can be regarded as an important consideration in their assessment decisions.

5.2 Teachers' perceptions of the role of assessment in student learning

In the context of the second research question, four themes were identified from the interviews: impact on motivation, supporting social and emotional learning, student involvement in assessment, and preparing students for the future. The following section will present those themes.

5.2.1 Impact on motivation

Through reflection on the role of assessment in student learning, teachers emphasised the impact assessments can have on students' motivation. This theme explores teachers' views on this impact, as well as some ways they motivate their students through assessments.

Teachers noted that assessment can significantly influence student motivation, both positively and negatively. For some students, assessments function as positive reinforcement, validating effort and encouraging further engagement. On the other hand, students can also internalise poor assessment results, which can cause a negative impact on motivation. Teacher T1 reflected on this,

“Some children love assessments because they perform well, and they love to know that they have done well, and it's a real confidence boost. If they are not doing well, however, it can really hinder their progress because they get disengaged, they can feel like they're not making progress, they tend to compare themselves to others” (teacher T2).

Participants were also aware of the risk that frequent testing, grading, or comparison with others could demotivate students, particularly those who struggle. All teachers noted that while some standardised tests are used in their schools, they rely on a range of different assessment types and methods in their practice. One of the teachers shared their opinion on this,

“Traditionally, I would say it's not great. I mean, putting an F on somebody's paper is not helpful, right? So, I don't work like that anymore. I think this idea of what you didn't know is very demotivating, putting all that pressure on the kid to know things that there's no way they're going to know. That doesn't make anybody feel good” (teacher T4).

Depending on how assessments are introduced and used in the classroom, they can either encourage students and boost their confidence or demotivate them. Concerning this,

teachers T5 and T6 both reflected on their school's practice to frame assessments as an opportunity for students to demonstrate their knowledge, "to show what they can do" (teacher T6), which can positively influence motivation. According to the teachers, when assessments are presented in this way as a chance to celebrate learning, many students feel encouraged and eager to participate.

Some teachers emphasised how important it is to know the students well to be able to understand how the assessment will influence them. This highlights the central role of student-teacher relationships in meaningful assessment. This relationship enables teachers to recognise the impact assessments might have on students and to be able to support them accordingly. Several teachers discussed the benefits of making assessments attractive to the students, usually by incorporating games or jokes that students enjoy in the assessments. This way, teachers felt that students were more engaged and interested in their learning. In addition, many teachers highlighted the importance of using assessment as a tool to motivate students by recognising effort and focusing on progress and growth. Teacher T3 said,

"I like in math the pre-assessment and the post-assessment so they can look at both and see how they've improved, and then they also reflect on that. Because sometimes they might have no idea on the pre-assessment, but then they got it on the post-assessment - always makes them feel good that way. So that's a good way of trying to get them to be a little bit more motivated as well" (teacher T3).

This theme focuses on the role of assessments in motivating students. Assessments can have a positive or negative impact on motivation, depending on how they are framed and implemented. When assessments are presented as an opportunity to demonstrate learning and growth, students tend to feel more motivated and engaged. This theme suggests that teachers perceive assessment as a tool that, when used thoughtfully, can foster a positive learning environment where students are motivated and encouraged to take ownership of their progress.

5.2.2 Supporting social and emotional learning

Within the role of assessment in student learning, participants also highlighted the connection between assessments and social and emotional development. Teachers recognised that assessment practices not only serve an academic purpose but also affect social and emotional aspects of children's personalities.

Assessment plays an important role in shaping students' self-esteem and attitudes towards learning. Several participants explained that assessment can support the development of significant social and emotional skills, such as perseverance and responsibility. They reflected on strategies they use to make assessments meaningful for students. One teacher asserted,

“I think it needs to be done in a subtle way that is helpful. So, normally, they learn how to receive feedback or how to celebrate their success in a way that doesn't then affect others around them. They build their resilience, they learn what to do if there's disappointment, and how they can utilise it and not be too hard on themselves. And that's definitely practised throughout the year” (teacher T2).

At the same time, teachers were mindful of the potential emotional impact of assessment on students. Many participants expressed their concerns about the stress and pressure students usually experience in connection with tests. They emphasised the importance of creating a supportive environment where assessment is seen as an opportunity for growth rather than judgment. Providing constructive feedback, focusing on progress, and helping students to see mistakes as part of the learning process were all mentioned as ways to encourage positive emotional responses to assessment. Teacher T4 reflected on the way they see the role of assessments in building resilience and responsibility.

“You have to know what you do and do not know. And it's okay to not know something, but you have to be able to do something about it. And if you didn't do very well, I have to give you an opportunity to do very well. If you then don't choose to take the opportunity, it's kind of on you, right?” (teacher T4).

This extract reflects the formative role of assessment in creating space for improvement and growth, but also a growth mindset approach, where awareness of students' learning gaps is seen as an opportunity for development. Many other teachers further discussed using assessment as an opportunity to encourage a growth mindset in their classrooms. This approach was seen as supporting students' emotional well-being and helping them develop a more positive attitude towards learning. Teacher T1 shared,

“In our PSHE³ curriculum, we do a lot of things on self-esteem, how to build our self-esteem, how to cope with knockbacks, so we teach them strategies to cope with news that isn't always so positive. But also, if they haven't scored too highly, we then point out all the positives that they have done. So, for example, with the reading paper, some

³ Personal, social, health, and economic (PSHE) education is a subject within the National Curriculum for England (Department for Education, 2013)

of my children asked why are they not doing it, and I said - Because it's a little tricky right now, but look how far you've come so far. You came with zero, and now you've got 15 sounds⁴, and then they're usually okay with it" (teacher T1).

Self-reflection was also often mentioned as a way to support students' social and emotional learning through assessment. Teachers of higher primary school grades particularly stressed the importance of student reflection in their assessment practices. Teachers T2 and T3 shared how students in their classrooms reflect on their learning in all subjects. They mentioned using different reflection forms to encourage students to acknowledge their progress and define their own learning targets. One teacher further explained how they use reflection on different skills, such as self-management skills, social skills, communication skills, etc. For teacher T3, focusing on skills within the assessment was a meaningful practice that benefits students. This teacher shared,

"We do a lot of reflecting. So they're telling us areas that they feel that they did really well in. You know, maybe they did well interviewing someone, or they did really well with the research skills, and they found great research and they put it into their own words and then they cited their sources. So maybe those are strengths. And then they've got to reflect on the sort of areas that they need to improve on. Maybe they didn't do so well taking notes. So I think it goes deeper and they get more out of it" (teacher T3).

Finally, teacher T6 shared that their school uses the PASS⁵ (Pupil Attitudes to Self and School) tests to better understand students' learning behaviour in relation to social and emotional well-being.

"We do the academic assessment, but we also do PASS testing. So we look at things like self-efficacy and readiness to learn. So I think it does give us a lot of good information with children who are like... You kind of look at them and you think, there's no reason why they're not getting this. And then we have that data we can look at. And it might just be that they're not quite ready to learn, or they're lacking in confidence, or they don't have the best attitude towards school. So it gives us a bigger picture" (teacher T6).

This sentiment reflects the value of understanding the emotional aspects of student learning as integral to academic success. As teacher T6 explained, understanding the reasons

⁴ The teacher is referring to the phonics section in the English language class, where children learn letters and sounds as a first step in the reading instruction

⁵ The Pupil Attitudes to Self and School (PASS) is a standardised test aimed at evaluating students' readiness to learn, motivation, and attitudes towards school (GL Assessment, 2024)

behind certain behaviours can help provide targeted interventions to improve motivation and confidence.

This theme addresses the connection between assessments and social and emotional learning. Besides measuring academic progress, assessments should also be used to help students develop healthy social and emotional skills. By creating a supportive environment and celebrating learning progress, teachers aim to encourage a positive attitude towards learning. This highlights a more holistic view of assessment, where social and emotional development are seen as integral to effective learning.

5.2.3 Student involvement in assessment

Another theme identified in the data relates to teachers' efforts to involve students in the assessment process. Student involvement in assessments contributes to the development of learner autonomy and active engagement in the learning process.

Several participants described how sharing learning goals and success criteria helps students take ownership of their learning. Teacher T2, for example, explained that when students are aware of the learning objectives and know how success will be measured, they are more engaged and focused. Teachers also emphasised the use of self-assessment and student reflections, which allow students to reflect on their progress and think more critically about their own work. Teacher T3 highlighted that reflection activities after assessment help students understand their strengths and challenges and encourage them to set goals for improvement. Similarly, teacher T4 said,

“We do a lot of reflection, a lot of rubrics that we either create or co-create with students, you know, that say - where do you think you are, where should you be, where do you want to be and what's your plan to get there from here” (teacher T4).

This quote highlights how assessments can be used to help students assess their own learning and guide them towards planning and organising their learning process. Involving students in creating assessments can positively influence their further engagement. In addition, teachers T2 and T3 shared the practice of organising student-led conferences (also known as tripartite), where, through reflection on their strengths and weaknesses and their learning progress, students set their own learning goals. The teachers' role in this case is to support students in reflection and to guide them towards defining meaningful targets.

Some teachers also focused on the benefits of student collaboration and peer assessment in involving students in their learning and assessment process. This was particularly important for teachers T2, T3, and T4, who shared that they use peer assessments rather often.

“For instance, in a writing lesson, we would say - You cannot comment on the person's handwriting, that's not the focus. So we need to put up the focus, the success criteria. For example, You've got to only focus on whether your partner has written a simile, is it a good simile, what is a good simile, and has your partner punctuated speech correctly. So we actually do talk about what is valuable feedback and again, that's a taught skill” (teacher T2).

This extract emphasises the importance of setting clear expectations from peer feedback and teaching the skill of providing constructive feedback. By assessing each other's work, students are actively engaging in the learning and assessment process. On student collaboration, teacher T3 further shared an example of how their students create assessments for each other in the maths class. This teacher reflected on all the benefits such practice has, from involving students in assessment to encouraging student collaboration through engaging activities.

This theme examined the significance of student involvement in learning and assessment and the different ways teachers ensure student engagement. Overall, the participants viewed involving students in assessment as an important part of supporting students' growth and responsibility in learning.

5.2.4 Preparing students for the future

This theme explores the purpose of assessment in preparing students for future academic and life challenges. This perspective reflects the importance of aligning assessments with real-world competencies. This was an important factor in international teachers' perceptions of the role of assessment in student learning.

Many participants described using assessments to develop skills students would need beyond the classroom. Concerning students' readiness for future challenges, many teachers emphasised that assessment should go beyond simple memorisation. Teacher T4 asserted,

“I think it's unrealistic in this day and age to say, Okay, learn all this stuff, and I'm going to give you one test, and you have to regurgitate everything you ever understood about this topic. Because that's not how the world works anymore. We have phones,

we can look things up, we can review things. We have tools at our fingertips that we didn't have before, so why do we need to retain all this information? And when we ask the world at large what they need in a worker, nobody says somebody who can do their times tables. We need people who can think critically, people who can analyse information, people who can collaborate, people who can try to attack an unknown problem. What we often ask people to do in assessments is to regurgitate" (teacher T4).

This extract is pivotal because it shows the way some teachers reflect on their role and the need to guide students towards becoming responsible global citizens prepared for future challenges. In this context, the entire teaching process, including assessment, is focused on strengthening critical thinking, problem-solving, and real-world applications of the learned concepts. Similarly, teachers T2 and T3 both reflected on the role of assessment to challenge students to demonstrate critical thinking and the ability to apply knowledge in meaningful ways. This suggests that teachers value the understanding and the application of different skills over the mere memorisation of information. Another aspect within assessment practices that was reflected upon is providing resources to students. Teacher T5 shared,

"I think it's important to give them resources if they need them because we use resources in school all the time, and then to suddenly say We're in a test, you can't have them, it just wouldn't make sense. We never say they can't use manipulatives to help them with their maths, or a sound chart. That's the whole part, we would never in life say - You need to do this task but you can't use these things, so why are we doing it to children?" (teacher T5).

By allowing students to access resources during assessments, the teacher emphasises problem-solving and the application of knowledge. This approach aligns with the view that assessments should prepare students for realistic challenges beyond the classroom.

Rather than focusing solely on assessing attainment, teachers expressed the need to use assessments to guide students' progress and prepare them for possible future challenges. Teachers commonly do this by focusing on understanding and application of knowledge, checking problem-solving, and including critical thinking throughout the assessment process.

5.3 Adaptation of assessment practices to accommodate students' needs in diverse learning environments

The research findings in the following section are organised around the third research question: How do teachers adapt their assessment practices to accommodate students in a

diverse learning environment? In this regard, two themes were identified from the interview data: assessment challenges and strategies for successful assessments.

5.3.1 Assessment challenges

While teachers acknowledged the importance of assessment in supporting student learning, they also reflected on several challenges that impact their assessment practices in international schools. A common concern was the diversity of student backgrounds, including differences in language proficiency, prior educational experiences, and learning disabilities. This theme examines those challenges.

One significant challenge identified by participants was the language barrier, particularly when assessing students who are still developing proficiency in English. Many teachers agreed that language barriers often influence how students interpret and understand tasks. One teacher shared,

“Especially in an international school setting, we need to consider language. For example, I have one boy in class who has no Czech no English, so while we’re trying to teach him English, we’re also checking his maths knowledge using his native language. Because he’s actually very good with maths and all the concepts we’re covering, like one more, one less, greater than, less than, he can do in his native language easily, but he’s struggling in our setting because he doesn’t have that vocabulary in English yet. So for now, I have to say it’s really hard to find that balance of - do I say they can do it, do I say that they can’t do it” (teacher T1).

This extract implies that limited language skills can pose a challenge in determining whether students’ performance reflects a lack of knowledge or simply a struggle to express themselves in English, as “we might think of someone as low, but they’re just not understanding what we’re saying” (teacher T6). Teacher T6 also considered this challenge and added that it was especially noticeable in written assessments or tasks requiring extended responses. While this is a challenge for teachers, participants also reflected on the impact language barriers can have on students. One teacher shared,

“Languages, it’s always hard. I taught a kid last year... He’s clearly an exceptionally smart boy, but he didn’t speak much English, and he couldn’t show that. And so it’s very frustrating for them. I mean, every kid has their own power and passion, right? And when they can’t show it, I think they can internalise it, you know, and it can either make them angry or, I mean, in older grades, it can make them feel like they

don't fit in, it can make them feel not so smart. So, language is a huge thing" (teacher T4).

This quote draws attention to the emotional and psychological impact of language barriers on students. The teacher highlights the negative influence this particular challenge can have on students who feel unable to share their knowledge and skills. This points to the connection between ability and expression, which can cause misrepresentations of students' actual knowledge.

Following, all teachers noted that prior educational experiences can also affect students' ability to express their knowledge and understanding. As some teachers shared, in the international school setting, students more often change schools. If students come from a different school system, it might take some time for them to adjust to the new one. This can pose a similar challenge in assessing students' actual level of knowledge. Teacher T6 said,

"Sometimes in international schools, the children, if they're coming from a different curriculum, like I know sometimes we've had children come from like a PYP curriculum, and depending on the school, the things that they in the British curriculum should know by a certain point they don't know. And then it's like - well do they not know it or they just haven't learned it yet" (teacher T6).

Finally, teachers reflected on different learning needs and challenges their students exhibit. Some teachers said that the challenge is also knowing the right amount of help they should offer to struggling students to maintain equality and equity in their classroom. Such is the case with teacher T1, who said,

"A lot of children have much higher reading ability than writing, so they can verbalize their answers, but they can't necessarily write them. So it's a challenge to know when it's appropriate to sort of scribe for them" (teacher T1).

This reflection points to the challenge of ensuring that assessments show students' true understanding, regardless of their ability to express it in a certain form. It also raises questions about accessibility and the role of teacher judgment in modifying assessments. The interview data have shown that teachers saw learning disabilities as challenges that can affect students' ability to access content or demonstrate their understanding. While this is a difficulty these teachers face, participants did not connect it to the context of international schools; rather, they presented it as a challenge that is widespread and that they count on.

Assessment practices in international schools involve certain challenges, from language-related barriers and prior educational experiences to specific learning needs. Teachers were aware of these particular difficulties, and they also reflected on the strategies they employ to overcome these challenges.

5.3.2 *Strategies for successful assessments*

As noted in the previous section, assessment in a diverse learning environment presents its own set of challenges. To address these challenges, international school teachers use a range of strategies to ensure assessments are more inclusive and responsive to the varied needs of their students. This theme examines those strategies that aim to create opportunities for all learners to demonstrate their understanding.

One commonly used strategy is differentiated assessment. Teachers described tailoring assessments to support students' different learning needs and abilities. In that context, teacher T3 shared,

“I can't just have one test. So sometimes I need to change it, so that it's in a different language, or sometimes there are students that have an educational plan, so maybe they need the test chunked into smaller bits or one question per page” (teacher T3).

Teachers further reported using various assessment types and methods, including presentations, hands-on activities, and observations to check for students' understanding and accommodate different learning styles. One teacher reported using different representations for the same concept,

“We use a lot of manipulatives and try to show the same thing in different ways and see if anything rings the bell. If they're like, Oh, I've seen it like that, that's okay, they can do it, it's just that we were showing it to them in a way they haven't seen before” (teacher T6).

Different representations are particularly useful for students coming from other schools who are used to different school systems. In addition, many teachers shared the importance of providing clear instructions to students. To ensure clarity and understanding, teachers T3, T5, and T6 use different techniques, such as translating applications and visual aids.

Besides using different types of assessments for students with specific learning needs, teachers also use various strategies, such as ensuring a calm space and allowing more time to complete assessments or breaking up the assessments into smaller, more manageable parts. International schools usually have smaller class sizes and more support staff to help the students. This helps ensure all the students are supported, and it helps with individualising the assessment process.

These strategies that teachers reflected on are used to ensure fair and accessible assessments. All the participants emphasised the importance of focusing on and responding to students' learning needs. In doing so, they shared that they often must be flexible and adaptive while teaching and assessing students. By continuously adjusting assessments and providing support, teachers aim to foster an inclusive learning environment where all students can demonstrate their strengths and progress.

6 Summary and discussion

This thesis aimed to increase understanding of teachers' perspectives on the assessment process in international schools in Prague. The following research questions served as a guide for the study:

- What are teachers' rationales for choosing certain types of assessments?
- What are teachers' perceptions of the role of assessment in student learning?
- How do teachers adapt their assessment practices to accommodate students in a diverse learning environment?

The findings of this study demonstrate that international school teachers use various assessment types and methods in their teaching practice. When choosing a suitable assessment type, they typically consider many different factors. However, one factor is prevailing, and that is the importance of appropriately adapting instruction to encourage student growth. Teachers described using assessments to identify learning gaps and tailor instruction accordingly. They also reflected on the significance of informing students about their learning progress. This aligns with existing research on formative assessment, which indicates its value in teaching and learning. It has been argued by many scholars (including Antoniou & James, 2014; Broadfoot et al., 2002; Harlen, 2014; Jiao & Lissitz, 2022; Petty, 2009) that formative assessment or assessment for learning is significant for two major reasons. First, it provides valuable information to teachers, which should be used to adjust and improve the instruction. Second, it offers student feedback that is useful for further learning. This study's findings confirm that international school teachers widely use formative assessments in their teaching practice.

Feedback is seen as a valuable assessment tool in improving student learning (Kolář & Šikulová, 2009; Pellegrino et al., 2001). Martin et al. (2022), in exploring teachers' perceptions and use of formative assessment, argue that although formative assessments are used to identify learning gaps, they are not used for identifying students' strengths. Teachers interviewed for this thesis, on the other hand, reflected on the importance of knowing what students can do well in order to build on that knowledge with further learning. In this sense, the findings of this thesis differ from those of Martin et al. (2022). Furthermore, in a study exploring students' perspectives on feedback, Mandouit and Hattie (2023) conclude that students value feedback focused on areas for improvement, which provides clear information on how to improve. Some teachers in this study also reflected on the need to provide clear and

effective feedback to students in order to support their learning and growth. Throughout the interviews, they shared different strategies they use to make feedback meaningful for students.

Moreover, Eriksson et al. (2018), in their study on teachers' rationales for giving feedback, identify responsiveness to students' needs as one of the key factors. This was confirmed with these international school teachers, who consistently emphasised the importance of understanding and responding to students' needs in the assessments. In addition, these teachers' practices strongly align with the responsive teaching concept by Fletcher-Wood (2018), which is an approach to instruction where teachers continually adapt their teaching based on students' understanding and progress. Many teachers reflected on the value of formative assessment in their classrooms, but some of them also emphasised the importance of using summative assessment in a formative way. This corresponds to Britton's (2021) claims that the assessment function is essential and that even summative assessments can serve a formative purpose. It also aligns with other scholars' (including Black & Wiliam, 2009; Gezer et al., 2021; Guo & Yan, 2019; Harlen, 2014) emphasis that summative assessments provide useful information that should be used to support further learning.

Within the OECD Reviews of Evaluation and Assessment in Education, Nusche (2013) asserts the significance of sharing students' assessment results with all relevant stakeholders to support strategic decision-making. The participants of this study acknowledged that, besides informing teachers and students, assessments also provide useful information to parents, the school management, and others involved in students' education. This transparency can help maintain accountability in teaching. Some teachers further emphasised the need to connect curriculum standards and assessments. This corresponds to some researchers' arguments that the curriculum, instruction, and assessment alignment is an important aspect in effective learning (Jiao & Lissitz, 2022; Shepard et al., 2017).

It is perhaps not surprising that teachers view assessment as a crucial aspect of student learning. The second research question examined teachers' perspectives on the assessment's role. They especially highlighted the impact of assessment on motivation for learning and the social and emotional aspects of students' personalities. In that context, teachers described using various strategies to make assessments more engaging to students in order to encourage and motivate their involvement. These findings support claims regarding the importance of the motivational function of assessment and the value of using assessment as positive

reinforcement for successful learning (Câmpean et al., 2024; Hattie & Temperley, 2007; Kolář & Šikulová, 2009; Leenknecht et al., 2020). In addition, some teachers reflected on the benefits of gamifying assessments to engage students. This aligns with Zhang and Crawford's (2023) conclusion that gamified formative assessments lead to improved student motivation and engagement in learning. Many teachers also shared the significance of the growth mindset in their classrooms. This concept, coined by Carol Dweck, emphasises the importance of effort and persistence in learning and regards mistakes as learning opportunities. From the reflections shared during this study, it is evident that the concept of the growth mindset guides these teachers' assessment practices. Many teachers further emphasised the importance of involving students in assessment and the benefits this practice can have on student learning. This finding aligns with the existing research on the importance of including students in learning and assessment (McMillan, 2016; Petty, 2009; Wiliam, 2013). Many of the strategies for helping students become active learners mentioned by Petty (such as students setting their learning targets, asking thoughtful questions, self-assessment, etc.) are regularly used by the interviewed teachers.

Furthermore, students' attitudes can be considered an integral component of the learning process. Several teachers shared that assessments can help them understand students' attitudes towards learning. One teacher specifically reflected on the benefits of understanding students' feelings and attitudes in order to understand their learning behaviour and support them in learning. This aligns with the perspectives of Hill (2012) and Popham (2017), who emphasise that students' attitudes can significantly impact their future behaviour and academic outcomes. In addition, Guo and Yan (2019) assert that students' attitudes towards assessment matter. In their study of attitudes towards formative and summative assessments, the authors conclude that although students consider assessment useful in their learning, they do not like being assessed. Some international school teachers also reflected on the need to consider students' feelings and attitudes when implementing assessments. In this regard, one teacher highlighted the importance of knowing the students well, including their attitudes towards learning and assessment, in order to understand how assessment will influence them.

Knowing their students and maintaining positive student-teacher relationships were also frequently emphasised by the teachers in this study. This aligns with Wiliam's (2013) assertion that knowing the students allows teachers to make informed decisions to support learning. Moreover, the author argues that students are more likely to accept and use feedback when they trust their teacher. In addition, Zheng (2022) argues that positive student-teacher

relationships can lead to a more positive attitude towards learning and eventually to improved students' well-being. This relationship between the teacher and the student should not be neglected, and the participants in this study especially reflected on its importance.

It has also been argued that international schools often respond to the need to prepare students for the requirements of a rapidly changing world (Hayden, 2013; Hayden & Thompson, 2008). Teachers interviewed in this study confirmed this claim. Many of them shared their views that assessment should prepare students for real-world learning rather than simply measure attainment. Therefore, in the assessment process, teachers particularly valued the application of gained knowledge, critical thinking and problem-solving skills over memorisation.

Finally, the international school is a specific educational environment that has its challenges. The third research question was set to explore how teachers adapt the assessments to accommodate students' diverse learning needs. Teachers reflected on various challenges connected to assessment in a diverse learning environment, and on strategies they use to address them effectively. They described using different strategies, such as offering resources, scribing for students, using various translation tools, etc. A key insight from this study regarding the third research question was the teachers' proactive and student-centred mindset. It has also been argued that adapting instruction is essential to effectively respond to students' challenges and create an inclusive learning environment (Mokiwa & Mokhele-Ramulumo, 2024). Throughout the interviews, teachers shared many examples of inclusive strategies in their assessment practices, which can indicate that they value diversity and inclusion.

Conclusion

School assessment is a significant part of the teaching and learning process, which guides instruction and supports meaningful learning. The role of teachers in this process is essential, since they design, administer, and interpret assessments to meet the diverse needs of their students. Given the rapid growth of international schools worldwide and in Prague, this thesis focused on exploring teachers' perceptions of assessments in this particular context. Data were collected from semi-structured interviews with six teachers and interpreted using thematic analysis. The research was set in three of Prague's most renowned international schools.

This study provides insight into how experienced international school teachers perceive and use assessment in diverse classrooms. Teachers highlighted best practices, such as using assessment to guide instruction, support learning, and maintain student motivation and social and emotional well-being. These findings contribute to a growing body of research that shifts the focus from assessment as a tool for measurement towards assessment as an integral part of the learning process. The study also contributes to the broader literature on international education by focusing on the assessment practices within this context. Finally, this study has the potential to contribute to the collaboration between international and state schools in Prague, particularly around inclusive assessment strategies and professional development.

The research findings illustrate that international school teachers view assessment as an important part of the learning process that, besides measuring student achievement, serves to inform teaching, support differentiation, and foster student growth. When selecting a specific type of assessment, teachers take multiple factors into account. However, the findings indicate that their decisions are primarily guided by what they believe would most benefit the students, whether through ensuring the formative function of assessment or by providing meaningful information to all relevant stakeholders. Teachers also consider the important role of assessment in student learning and growth. The results demonstrate teachers' reflections on the impact of the assessment on students' social and emotional development. Moreover, this study highlights the importance of teachers' flexibility and adaptability in teaching and assessing, particularly in response to the diverse learning needs of their students.

In conclusion, the interviewed participants consistently expressed appreciation for the role of assessment in learning, while reflecting on their assessment choices and practices.

While the findings of this study may appear notably positive, it is important to acknowledge the context in which the data were collected. The study focused on teachers from some of the most reputable international schools in Prague, and the data reflect teachers' perspectives, beliefs, and personal experiences. As such, the findings may not fully capture the diversity of practices across the international schools. Further research could explore assessment practices in smaller or newer international schools, where different challenges and constraints may shape teachers' approaches. In addition, future studies can also focus on exploring students' perspectives on the assessments in international schools to investigate how students perceive the influence of assessment on their motivation and social and emotional development.

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List of figures

Figure 1 Communication chain	25
Figure 2 Curriculum-Instruction-Assessment alignment triangle	41

List of abbreviations

AfL	Assessment for Learning
AoL	Assessment of Learning
CIS	Council of International Schools
COBIS	Council of British International Schools
ECIS	Educational Collaborative for International Schools
IPC	International Primary Curriculum
IB	International Baccalaureate
IB PYP	International Baccalaureate Primary Years' Programme
ISA	International Schools Association
ISC	Independent Schools Council
NEASC	New England Association of Schools and Colleges
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PASS	Pupil Attitudes to Self and School
PSHE	Personal, Social, Health, and Economic
UN	United Nations

List of Appendices

Appendix 1 – Informed consent form.....	87
Appendix 2 – Interview guide.....	88
Appendix 3 – Example of the coding process.....	90
Appendix 4 – Colour coding feedback policy in one of the schools	91

Appendix 1 – Informed consent form

Dear Madam/Sir,

Thank you for agreeing to participate in the research on *Assessment in international primary schools in Prague from the teachers' perspectives*. The purpose of collecting data is to get a better understanding of teachers' views on assessment practices for the master study at the Faculty of Arts of the Charles University in Prague. The method is a semi-structured interview.

You were chosen as a possible participant because of your experience with conducting assessment in international education. You will be asked to respond to some questions about the topic of the enquiry. The estimated time of the interview is 45 minutes. The interview will be audio recorded and the data will later be transcribed and anonymized. Your anonymity will be protected and all personal information will remain confidential. Your participation is voluntary and you may stop the interview at any time.

Should you have any questions regarding the study, please contact me at

[REDACTED].

I greatly appreciate your cooperation, and ask you to provide your consent to participate in the research.

Jelena Radojevic

Faculty of Arts

Charles University

I confirm by my signature that I have been informed about the conditions of my participation in the interview for the master's thesis entitled *Assessment in international primary schools in Prague from the teachers' perspectives*, I agree to participate in this research and I agree with using the data I have provided for the purposes of this study.

Name of the participant

Place and date

Signature

Appendix 2 – Interview guide

<i>Background information</i>	• What grade level do you teach? • How long have you been working as a primary school teacher? • How long have you been working in an international school setting? • How do you define assessment in the context of your school? • What types of assessments are commonly used in your school? How are they designed and administered?
RQ1: <i>What are the teachers' rationales for choosing certain types of assessment over others?</i>	• What types of assessments do you use most commonly in your classroom? • Why do you prefer certain types of assessment? • Can you walk me through how you typically plan an assessment? How do you decide what to include? • When you're assessing students, what factors or considerations come to mind most (school policy, curriculum standards, individual student needs)? Could you share an example? • In your experience, what role do external factors like school policy or parental expectations play in shaping your assessment practices? • How do you align your assessment methods with the learning objectives of your lessons or curriculum? Can you provide examples of how this looks like in your classroom? • To what extent do you consider the learning objectives when designing assessments, or do you sometimes rely on more intuitive approaches to evaluate student progress?

<i>RQ2: What are teachers' perceptions of the role of assessment in student learning?</i>	• How do you use assessment results to inform your teaching? • In your opinion, how does assessment impact students' motivation and engagement in learning? • How do you provide feedback to students based on their assessment results? • How do you involve students in the assessment process? • What strategies do you use to make assessments meaningful and engaging for them?
<i>RQ3: How do teachers adapt their assessment practices to accommodate students in a diverse learning environment?</i>	• What challenges do you face when conducting assessments in an international school setting? • What strategies do you employ to address these challenges? • Can you share an example of a successful assessment practice or strategy you have implemented? What made it effective?
<i>Follow-up questions</i>	• What kind of support or professional development opportunities do you receive to enhance your assessment practices? • How do you communicate assessment results to parents? • In your opinion, what changes or improvements could be made to the assessment practices in your school? • Is there any other information that you feel might be important and will contribute to this study?

Appendix 3 – Example of the coding process

The image displays two examples of a coding process interface, each consisting of a transcript window on the left and a code segment window on the right.

Interview 2:

Transcript:

← Interview 2

Search Tools ...

B U I T 16

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Absolutely. So like day on day would inform the planning within that term and for individuals. Then we discuss kind of groups of children. So we might have different and tailored individual plans for children that are on the SEND register. We also have challenge and potential children as well, which we're trying to extend. And then on a half-termly basis, I would meet with the year leads and ask them to explain their data to me, design an action plan that they want to see from their teaching team to make sure that there's always progress being made, so it's continually checked up.

Alright. And what types of assessments do you use most commonly in your classroom?

So it might be quick check things, so holding up a whiteboard with quick answers so I can scan the room. It could be things online like Google Forms or quick quizzes and games. We use things like Quizlet and Gimkit and these kind of quick quizzes. I also have some self-reflection that we do, which is part of our feedback and marking policy, where the children actually self-assess how well they've done in the lesson. And for English, we give them what success criteria should be in their lesson, and they look for that in their own writing. So they know what they're looking for and they can identify it themselves. So we do lots of kind of peer marking. I do as much as I can verbal feedback within the lesson.

Code Segments:

- informin... < (RQ1 Theme 1) Using a... 14
- collec... < (RQ1 Theme 4) Accounta... 15
- progress a... < (RQ2 Theme 4) Prepa... 14
- checking u... < (RQ1 Theme 1) Using ... 5
- On the spot ... < (RQ1 Theme 2) Givi... 5
- gamified a... < (RQ2 Theme 3) Involv... 6
- student r... < (RQ2 Theme 2) Social ...
- student involve... < (RQ2 Theme 3) L...
- succes... < (RQ1 Theme 1) Using ass... 4

Interview 3:

← Interview 3

Search Tools ...

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I think in a few ways. One would be assessing students to see where they are. So we do use a lot of what I'd say pre-assessment. Let me take math for an example, and then I could go through the different subjects. But using a pre-assessment so that I can see what concepts do kids know in math, and what are the areas that I need to kind of nurture them through, and hopefully get them to the next level. So in a sense, it's collecting data for me. But assessment can also be monitoring students as well, too. I don't want to slam students with test after test after test, or assessment after assessment after assessment. So in math in particular, it could be formative assessments that we use. So after a unit, it could be just a quick little exit ticket just to see where they are, and then I could use that to kind of form my teaching for the next lesson. Every student's different. Everyone learns differently. But for math, we kind of do a pre-assessment, and there's formative assessments, and then there's a summative assessment, again for math. Writing is a little bit different. We do sort of an on-demand writing prompt at the beginning of a unit. So we're doing memoir right now. So before we even start the unit, we just kind of give them a bit of a prompt and... tell us about a trip that you took, or a birthday party that was the best, or a time your brother pushed you in the lake, something, just so we can see what their writing is like. And then, again, we work through a six-, seven-week sort of a memoir unit writing, and then they do a published piece at the end. So in that case, the assessment in this case is a published draft of writing, hopefully they've incorporated all the mini-lessons that we want to do all the way through, so dialogue to character traits to

Code Segments:

- baseline a... < (RQ1 Theme 1) Using a... 9
- collec... < (RQ1 Theme 4) Accounta... 15
- formativ... < (RQ1 Theme 1) Using a... 10
- informin... < (RQ1 Theme 1) Using a... 14
- formativ... < (RQ1 Theme 1) Using a... 10
- informin... < (RQ1 Theme 1) Using a... 14
- attain... < (RQ1 Theme 4) Accountabi... 6
- baseline a... < (RQ1 Theme 1) Using a... 9
- differ... < (RQ3 Theme 2) Strategie...
- every student... < (RQ3 Theme 1) Ch...
- application ... < (RQ2 Theme 4) Prep...
- succes... < (RQ1 Theme 1) Using a... 4

Feedback & Help

Appendix 4 – Colour coding feedback policy in one of the schools



